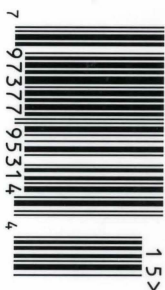


# RACE

# TRAITOR

- Timothy  
McVeigh
- High School  
Shootings
- Fight Club
- Chinese  
Exclusion
- National  
Bolshevism



Fall 2001

number 15

\$5

TREASON TO WHITENESS IS LOYALTY TO HUMANITY

# Race Traitor

---

number fifteen/fall 2001

## contents

### features

JOHN GARVEY: The Life and Death of Timothy McVeigh .....	1
JAMES MURRAY: Fiction: April 19.....	9
LARA BRAVEHEART: Tim McVeigh and Me.....	13
John Brown and the Militia .....	18
Race Behind Bars, An Exchange.....	19
RICH GIBSON: Lonely Privilege.....	24
AMIRI K. BARKSDALE: Fight Club .....	53
TIMOTHY MESSER-KRUSE: Crusaders and Bystanders .....	91

### reviews

Loren Goldner, Adam Sabra .....	125
---------------------------------	-----

**editors:** John Garvey, Beth Henson, Noel Ignatiev

**contributing editors:** John Bracey,

Kingsley Clarke, Selwyn Cudjoe, Lorenzo Komboa Ervin,  
James W. Fraser, Carolyn Karcher, Robin D.G. Kelley,  
Louis Kushnick, Kathryn V. Lindberg, Theresa Perry,  
Phil Rubio, Vron Ware

**Race Traitor** is published by The New Abolitionists, Inc.  
Post Office Box 499, Dorchester MA 02122

Single copies are \$5 (\$6 postpaid),  
subscriptions (four issues) are \$20 individual, \$40 institutions.

**Race Traitor** is distributed by AK, DeBoer, and Desert Moon  
Website: <http://www.racetraitor.org>

# THE LIFE AND DEATH OF TIMOTHY MCVEIGH

BY JOHN GARVEY

**T**imothy McVeigh is dead. What can we do so that his death and the deaths that he caused do not leave us even farther from the world that we want? I haven't been to Oklahoma City; I don't really know what it's like to visit the scene of the bombing. I don't know if I would be more affected by the painful memories or turned off by the transformation of meaningful family items (like a stuffed animal) into only sentimental public tokens (like lots of stuffed animals) with no real meaning for most of the people who will look at them. But, especially since the weeks before his execution, I have been struggling to understand the significance of his place in American history.

Timothy McVeigh was an American man at war with America. By the time of the bombing, he appears to have felt no special animosity towards *any* of his fellow Americans other than those who worked for agencies he thought to be responsible for assaults against peoples' rights and freedoms (such as the FBI and the ATF), but he refused to accord Americans any special standing among the peoples of the world. Those of us who believe in good wars waged by the government of the United States, or probably by any government anywhere, need to pay close attention to the deeds and political vision of Timothy McVeigh. His willingness to wage war against his fellow Americans and his political justifications for his actions, meager as his own words on the topic are, should cause the rest of us to stop and think about the ways in which this country wages war and the ways in which that war-making inevitably affects those of us unharmed by the bombs and missiles exploding on our television screens.

Timothy McVeigh was not the agent of any foreign power. He bombed the federal building in Oklahoma City because it housed agencies of the American government that had been responsible for crimes against Americans (specifically, the incineration of Branch Davidians at Waco, Texas and the assault on the Weaver family in Ruby Ridge, Idaho). He refused to acknowledge any distinction between those who gave the orders

*John Garvey is one of the editors of Race Traitor. The other editors wish it known that they agree with this statement.*

## 2 RACE TRAITOR

and those who just worked in those agencies. He also refused to acknowledge any distinction between those who were in that building because of their direct involvement with those agencies and those who were merely engaging in normal interactions with other federal agencies, such as those filing for Social Security benefits. According to Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck, the authors of *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh & the Oklahoma City Bombing*:

McVeigh had considered targeting specific individuals, among them Lou Horiuchi, the FBI sharpshooter who had killed Randy Weaver's wife, Vicki, at Ruby Ridge. He considered going after a member of the sharpshooter's family, to inflict the same kind of pain the surviving Weaver's had experienced. But ultimately he decided that he would make the loudest statement by bombing a federal building. By destroying people who compiled a complete cross-section of federal employees, McVeigh believed that he was showing federal agents how wrong they were to attack the entire Branch Davidian family. In McVeigh's opinion, every division of the federal government had at one time or another mistreated the public. Now, McVeigh decided, was the time to make them all pay.

That's what happens in war. They all pay—even those whom no one believes should pay. Soldiers die and so do a lot of other people, including children, who play no active role in war-making. (From all accounts, however, McVeigh did not know that there was a childcare center in the building; had he known, he might have changed his plan. He had previously decided not to bomb a federal building in Little Rock, Arkansas because it had a florist shop on the ground floor.)

His concern for protecting some while rather cold-bloodedly anticipating the deaths of others had a logic, albeit a very narrowly constructed one—a soldier's logic. From Michel and Herbeck:

Timothy McVeigh wanted a body count—the higher the better. The federal government, he reasoned, had unlimited amounts of cash to replace buildings, but the lives of federal employees could not be replaced. He needed to deliver a quantity of casualties the federal government would never forget. It was the same tactic the American government used in armed international conflicts, when it wanted to send a message to tyrants and despots. It was the United States government that had ushered in this new anything-

goes mentality. McVeigh believed, and he intended to show the world what it would be like to fight a war under these new rules, right in the federal government's own backyard.

In one of his relatively few written statements, McVeigh made this connection explicit:

In Oklahoma City, it was family convenience that explained the presence of a day-care center placed between street level and the law-enforcement agencies which occupied the upper floors of the building. Yet when the discussion shifts to Iraq, any day-care center in a government building instantly becomes "a shield." Think about that.

(Actually, there is a difference here. The administration has admitted to knowledge of the presence of children in or near Iraqi government buildings, yet they still proceed with their plans to bomb—saying they cannot be held responsible if children die. There is no such proof, however, that knowledge of the presence of children existed in relation to the Oklahoma City bombing.)

When considering morality and "mens rea" (criminal intent) in light of these facts, I ask: Who are the true barbarians?

Timothy McVeigh was no "natural born killer." He was born in 1968 and grew up in the suburbs of Buffalo at a time when those suburbs were being drained of jobs and the predictable, tolerably miserable futures those jobs made possible. His childhood appears to have been filled with ups and downs (probably the biggest "down" being the separation and divorce of his parents), but his experiences were not so different from those of a lot of ordinary kids. His father worked for more than thirty years at Harrison Radiator, a company that provided radiators for GM cars. His grandfather had worked there too. But Tim never did. It's not clear if he could have. We shouldn't imagine that there was no way that he could have become connected with that stable world of work and weariness. Even McVeigh had his choices. But his world was not his father's or mother's world.

Eventually, he chose the army. And by all accounts, Tim McVeigh was an excellent soldier. He was an especially excellent shot. He got scores on the gunnery range that no one else got. (It's likely that a good part of the credit for his marksmanship lay with the many hours he spent learning to handle guns and shoot with his grandfather.)

Tim McVeigh got to use his considerable shooting skills on Iraqi

#### 4 RACE TRAITOR

soldiers during the Gulf War. And at the moment when his skill brought him praise, his stomach turned. The story's a bit long but it's worth knowing. McVeigh was assigned to a Bradley fighting vehicle under a Lieutenant Rodriguez.

...On the second day of the ground war many of the Iraqis were still surrendering, but off in the distance McVeigh's crew spotted a dug-in enemy machine-gun nest. It was more than a mile away, but Rodriguez knew McVeigh could hit it. He gave the order to fire.

McVeigh saw a flash of light, the apparent source of some Iraqi gunfire. He pressed his forehead against the padded viewfinder, zeroing in on the target. He knew he'd have to adjust his shot slightly to allow for the movement of the rolling Bradley.

An Iraqi soldier popped his head up for a split second.

From his position roughly nineteen football fields away, McVeigh fired, hitting the soldier in the chest. The man's upper body exploded.

"His head just disappeared ... I saw everything above the shoulders disappear, like in a red mist," McVeigh recalls.

The same shot, a 25-mm high-explosive round with the power of a small grenade, killed another Iraqi soldier who was standing a few feet away from the man whom McVeigh was targeting.

"The guy next to him just dropped," McVeigh says. "In the military, you're always supposed to stay at least five meters from anybody, at any time. That's the minimum fragmentation distance for some weapons."

It was an astonishing shot.

"Did you see that?" another gunner exclaimed over the radio. "Great shot!" ...

McVeigh credited the shot to his training, his gunnery skills, and a bit of luck. "I was scanning back and forth. I saw a muzzle flash. That's where instinct takes over. If you're trained enough, you do things by instinct that you later attribute to luck."

Army combat procedures called for McVeigh to fire again. But this time he decided not to follow the book. In his viewfinder, he saw nothing but barren desert and a few surrendering Iraqis.

He stopped shooting.... his lieutenant was not pleased.

“Why’d you stop firing? Keep firing!” Rodriguez said.

“I got ‘em, sir,” McVeigh said. “I got ‘em.”

Finally, to satisfy the lieutenant, he fired off a few more rounds, far off into the desert....

McVeigh received the Army Commendation Medal for taking out the Iraqis. Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Moreno wrote that McVeigh had inspired members of his platoon by “destroying an enemy machine-gun emplacement, killing two Iraqi soldiers and forcing the surrender of 30 others from dug-in positions.” McVeigh also received four other medals for his service in the Persian Gulf.

But the would-be Rambo was emotionally torn about what he had done. Though he’d been around weapons since he was a boy, this was the first time he had fired at a human being. The two Iraqis were the first lives he had taken. In a way it had been a great thrill, putting his skills to the test and succeeding. But later, as he reflected on his own actions, McVeigh found that his first taste of killing had left him angry and uncomfortable.

As they rolled through the desert, members of McVeigh’s platoon saw horribly wounded enemy soldiers, some of them without arms or legs, trying to crawl along the sand. They saw stray dogs chewing on severed body parts.

At one point, members of McVeigh’s unit were told to help bury the Iraqi dead in the sand. Later, without explanation, they were told to stop the burials and leave the bodies out where they could be seen.

According to a friend knowledgeable about events in the Middle East, at one point in the aftermath of the defeat of Saddam’s forces, American planes gave cover to Saddam’s planes as they shot down Iraqi soldiers attempting to organize a revolt against him. I don’t think McVeigh would have been surprised. Back to Michel and Herbeck:

Saddam, with his belligerent ways, had started this conflict. But now, as part of the massive Allied fighting force, McVeigh felt as if he were one of the bullies, one of a type he had reviled since childhood. Beating the Iraqis was almost too easy.

It still bothered McVeigh to be part of a war that involved no direct threat to the United States. It rankled him further to be part of a United Nations force that, he feared, was eventually planning

## 6 RACE TRAITOR

to take over the world. Though he tried to justify his killing of two Iraqis by telling himself that the Iraqis were trying to fire on Americans, he knew the enemy machine guns had been too far away to do any damage.

“What made me feel bad was, number one, I didn’t kill them in self-defense,” McVeigh says now. “When I took a human life, it taught me these were human beings, even though they speak a different language and have different customs. The truth is, we all have the same dreams, the same desires, the same care for our children and our family. These people were humans, like me, at the core.”

When Timothy McVeigh joined the army, the United States was poised to assert its unique status as military master of the world. At the same time, while the United States enjoyed a prosperity of sorts, it was no longer a prosperity built on unchallenged US supremacy in industry. When he got home, Tim got to choose from among the pluses and minuses of a world without the kind of stable relationship to a job and a wage that his grandfather and father had pretty much taken for granted. Outside of his years in the army, Timothy McVeigh worked in a Burger King, as a security guard (sometimes armed) for a number of firms or as a salesman at a gun shop and gun shows. One of his security guard assignments involved protecting an abortion clinic during right-to-life protests. And his short-lived efforts to get some civil service-type jobs with the New York State or federal governments were unsuccessful. Outside of a couple of brief encounters, he never had a chance to develop the kind of everyday, self-deprecating, boss-hating and sometimes intimate, relationships that are the bread and butter of life in working class America—even in those parts of it most distorted by whiteness. He was not alone. In South Boston, discontented young people sought refuge in drugs and crime and created a profoundly self-destructive alternative solidarity to the solidarity of whiteness and work that was the birthright of their parents and relatives (See *All Souls* by Michael Patrick MacDonald.) In Detroit, young people found comradeship in gangs linked to neo-Nazi organizations (See *The Racist Mind* by Raphael S. Ezekiel).

In all cases, the futures were bleak but the visible alternatives never included the possibility of proletarian revolution as a world-civilizing project. Those who advocated rebellion or revolution with these young people presented it as the refusal of civilization rather than its fulfillment.



At the same time those who had once, in the all-too-brief moment of the 1960s, been the proponents of a civilizing revolution had for the most part withdrawn to more provincial lives of professional work and the raising of children. They had nothing to say to Timothy McVeigh. And at the time McVeigh decided on his course of action, few of the young activists who have since demonstrated their willingness to confront the organized power of the government on the streets of Seattle, Washington, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Quebec City had yet revealed themselves to be as disgusted or prepared as he was.

Timothy McVeigh never claimed to be a race traitor but he does not appear to have been a white supremacist. He did not start a race war. He did not start a race riot. He did not participate in a lynching. He did not bomb a black church. He did not plant a white bomb. He killed people considered by the conventions of our time to be black and white. He probably never thought about it but he might not even have considered himself white. He lived and died at a time when whiteness had been splintered but had not yet been replaced by an anti-whiteness that could serve as the groundwork for a renewed American civilization.

The lost possibilities are painful ones. When all too few appear to be willing to act on the strength of their convictions, Timothy McVeigh, more or less on his own, refused to do anything less. McVeigh came back from the Gulf War a different person. At times he was close to breaking down. On one particularly bad day, it was only the unarticulated kindness and care of his grandfather that saved him. It was a simple matter—a couch to sleep on and no questions asked. But even the kindness of his grandfather couldn't keep him still. He set off from Buffalo and all but jumped from place to place—Florida, Michigan, Nebraska, Arkansas, Arizona. He reminds me of John Brown and Huck Finn—although he mostly used beat up cars rather than a horse or a raft. Staying put was the worst danger of all because you might get used to it. But American rootlessness has its dangers as well.

Let me end with the wisdom of fiction. The author's notes included at the end of *Juneteenth*, Ralph Ellison's posthumously published novel, include the suggestive sentence, "Hickman is 'Jim' and Bliss is 'Huck' who cut out for the territory." In Ellison's novel, Hickman is an almost godly black minister and Bliss is a polished white supremacist whom Hickman had raised. When Huck Finn announces at the end of Mark Twain's novel that he is setting out for the territory (Oklahoma), he doesn't realize the danger for his soul when he no longer has the benefit

## 8 RACE TRAITOR

of contact with Jim.

From the moment Timothy McVeigh set out from Buffalo to the moment he arrived in that same Oklahoma, he never had the benefit of sustained contact with the Jim's of our day. Had he had it, he might have done something different from what he did. He might even have become the John Brown of our day. It's a shame he didn't have the opportunity. We all bear some of the responsibility.

# APRIL 19

FICTION BY JAMES MURRAY

I have memorized the names and social security numbers of the shooters who did the work on 19 April. They were members of the 'Hostage Rescue Team.' They shot the people as they tried to run out of the burning buildings. They fired their rifles in 3-shot bursts, like the professionals that they are, not wasting ammo at the high point of their careers. I have seen the photos of the children, they were in a special hiding place underground. This hiding place had no ventilation, and as the FBI pumped the building full of CS gas the children had no place to go. The CS gas rigidified and contorted their muscles, and the photos show some of the children folded backwards like pretzels. Their spines were snapped and broken by the force that their young muscles were exerting.

The events of that day have altered every facet of my life. Nothing would ever be the same.

I remember a few days before the massacre, it would have been the forty-something day of the standoff or 'siege.' I was in a hotel room in Nebraska, about a quarter mile from a truckstop off I-80. I was listening to a shortwave radio show, the speaker was broadcasting live via sat phone from Waco. We said he could see the Branch-Davidian compound lit up by FBI spotlights through his field glasses. I will never forget what he said. The static was heavy, the sound was fading in and out. He said, "If the citizens of this country don't start arriving here immediately with arms, the government is going to burn these people alive!" Still I couldn't believe it was true a few days later when I watched it happen. I spent the day glued to the T. V., watching the re-plays and news conferences and official expert explanations. I had no way of knowing that day how my life was changing. I didn't hear the doors slamming shut. All I felt was a tugging at my sleeve.

I was born during the first week of the Tet Offensive, 1968. I grew up in western Pennsylvania. My parents divorced when I was seven and I grew up living with my Dad. Dad works in a cardboard factory, he has all his life. I love my Dad but there was always this separation between us. I could never look up to him. He always

*This piece arrived in the fall of 1999 with a note saying, "Since McVeigh hasn't written his own story, I decided to write it for him."*

seemed soft, like he had been crushed by his life and losing Mom. But he was a good Dad, he just never knew what to tell me.

The last thing I wanted was to work in a factory for the rest of my life but I didn't know what to do. Now I think I should have gone to college and been a lawyer or historian, But that just wasn't on the table. I didn't even have the conception that going to college was possible. No one ever mentioned it to me. I liked guns and camping so I joined the army.

I started reading in the army. I read about 1775 and the Civil War and about Jefferson and the assassination of Kennedy. I started to see the lies I had been told in school. It happened a little bit at a time. I was a good soldier in the Gulf. I killed a lot of people. Once we hit a bunker with a wireless rocket. The Iraqi soldiers came running out firing all over the place. I was on a scoped .50 mounted on a Humvee and as they rushed out into the desert I started taking their heads off at 1500 yards. My LT was looking through his field glasses and he couldn't believe it, headshot, headshot, headshot, at 1500 yards.

Sometimes kids came up to us and begged for food. They wouldn't let us give them any and it bothered me a lot.

My company got back to the States and the LT asked me if I wanted to go to Special Forces school. I was pretty out of shape and burnt from the War but I said why not, I'll go through the qualification course. So they sent me to Ft. Benning, to get up at dawn and run and take IQ tests. One morning before breakfast they lined us up in front of the barracks and a Captain read out seven or eight guy's social security numbers. Mine was one of the numbers read out. The class went to breakfast and those of us singled out stayed. Next a LT Colonel shows up and he and the Captain call us into a room with donuts and coffee, they give us this vague presentation about, "Opportunities other than exist in the regular army." This is the way it happens I thought, I'm being recruited to do contract work for the CIA. I filled out their forms, it took most of the day. But I never heard from them again. Four days later I sprained both ankles on an obstacle course. They swelled up the size of softballs. No way could I go on that way so I dropped out of the qualification course. I went back to my Company but I was growing more and more disillusioned with the army. I was tired of saluting assholes for the privilege of killing people for the bankers and Wall St.

I came home to Pennsylvania and got a job as a security guard. I

worked all night and covered my windows with cardboard so I could sleep during the day. I continued reading history and I bought a shortwave radio and listened to what I heard. I took notes and did my own research. I began to see there were no accidents in American history. Things happen for a reason. The coup took place in '63 for a reason. When they usurped the Constitution they did it for a reason. They want to bring in a one-world police state. For the first time I regretted killing all those Iraqis. I had been sent to do it to bring in a New World Order. Some people call it ZOG, Zionist Occupied Government, but it is more than just some Jews. It is secret societies and bankers and the military industrial complex. They work together to bring in a New World Order. All of this started to drive me crazy. Grandpa saw it. He never knew why, but one day I showed up at his door, freezing outside, in only sweats and a t-shirt. I was near total complete breakdown. Grandpa, I'm sure, never told anybody about that day and I respect him greatly for that. I spent almost an hour at his house "losing it." I was almost suicidal at that point. Rage, denial, acceptance—all these feelings were battling for control.

I quit my job and drove cross-country to Waco during the siege. The things I learned there and the people I met convinced me of the unmistakable truth. The country in which I was a citizen was becoming totalitarian. In the face of such a situation there are only two options: acceptance or resistance. I chose the latter.

I realized there would be no justice for the people murdered at Waco. The killers would never be punished for their crimes. I continued travelling around the country, going to gun shows. I'd be on some interstate in Kansas, a trunk full of t-shirts, books and used guns. I'd think about Waco and how after they burnt the buildings to the ground they raised the American flag over the ruins. It made we want to scream. I'd go to the next gun show and set up my wares on a table. I remember one time I sold a Chinese AK-47 to a guy who was there with his wife. They had their kid with them in a stroller. After he bought the rifle he told me, "I don't care how many bodies we have to step over, it's time to take this country back!" It made me smile, I was proud to be selling him a rifle.

I started meeting people who were forming militias. They were from Michigan, Arkansas, Ohio, Arizona, from all over. They were my kind of people, average guys who loved guns and freedom. A lot of them reminded me of my Dad but they weren't broken down by the years in the factory or mill. They still had their ideals intact. I

## 12 RACE TRAITOR

stayed in some of their houses, drank beer with them after gun shows. We all agreed that the government had been taken over by thieves and fascists. The militia guys were waiting for the Feds to do a gun grab or declare martial law. Then they were going to head for the hills or go underground. They weren't talking about politics or even revolution, they were talking about a civil war.

Waco continued to smolder for a lot of us. We knew what had happened there. Forget, no way. Forgive, never. I hooked up with a couple of army buddies from before the war. One lived in Arizona and the other in Ohio. I worked the gun show circuit all through the Midwest, crashing on my buddies' couches on either side of the cycle. We had all woken up, we knew what was going on. We started preparing to exercise our hatred. It was not blind, it was sensible. The rifles, my Glock, the backpacks, boots, camo, radios, water purifiers, ammunition, the maps, it was all sensible. I decided I didn't want to live in one of their concentration camps, that I'd rather bleed to death in the Ozarks. That is what they have in store for those who do not accept the New World Order. I've read Hegel, I know the theorem. Thesis plus antithesis equals synthesis. We set up a system of caches for our guns and goods in different National Forests. We were ready for the shit to happen, ready to go. But the clock kept moving, tick, tick, tick.

"How long are we going to wait?" I would ask people, "How far are we going to let them push us?" No one had a good answer for how the civil war would start. "We need at least ten years to prepare a ground war," Mark from Michigan told me and then he added—with his eyes twinkling—"But we may not get that long."

My friends and I decided not to wait.

I don't hate the blacks because they're fooled and fucked over just like everybody else. I don't even hate the Jews but they are not going to be able to keep all that they've stolen. I don't know who I hate because you never see their faces. The lackeys who wear the uniforms are only worthy of contempt. I don't even consider them human, not like my Mom or Sister or Grandad.

We had to try to start the civil war and maybe some day it will be understood. The government had to be told that they couldn't just burn people alive and walk away. That there would be a price. That some of us would pay them back in blood. Man for man, woman for woman, child for child. I am not sorry and I have no regrets for what we did. I am an American patriot and I am prepared to die.

# TIM MCVEIGH AND ME

BY LARA BRAVEHEART

*"I was, and still am, a co-conspirator in the Oklahoma City Bombing. Can I forgive myself, and you, and start again?"*

**M**y life as a co-conspirator in bombings, murder and starvation started when I was young. All it cost was my money, my vote, and my silence. I never did any of my killing myself, someone else was always kind enough to do it for me. I sold my soul, my vote and my voice for thirty pieces of silver.

I am a white South African. My first ten pieces of silver came from the South African Apartheid Government. In exchange for the privileges of good schools, universities, shopping malls, jobs, careers, servants and good food for my "white face," I paid my taxes, voted and was silent as thousands of blacks were tortured, imprisoned and murdered, because they simply wanted to live their lives freely and be treated humanely. I paid for my innocence to hide my shame.

My second ten pieces of silver came from corporations in the name of mass production and mass consumption. I worked like a robot on steroids. I conformed like a sheep. I was polite, nice and thought that the aim of my life was a good job, nice house, and 2.2 kids. I did what I was told. I drank beer to numb my questions, slept with strangers to numb my heart's longings, and bought toys to entertain my brainwashed mind. I watched as motor companies bought up public transit systems and annihilated them. I watched as mining companies raped the earth. I watched as pharmaceutical companies poured toxins down our rivers. I watched as oil companies supported the murder of indigenous peoples. I watched as arms manufacturers made billions, subsidized by my taxes, selling landmines, guns and rocket launchers to dictators around the world. I watched as the CIA supported Saddam Hussein with my tax money, my vote and my silence. I watched mother earth get a hole in her ozone layer, her rivers turn toxic, her fish die, and her indigenous peoples get slaughtered because they still lived in harmony with nature. I had lost all harmony with my nature. I had become a silent killing machine. I was eating my own fear of what I had become, I was so disgusted with

*Lara Johnstone, aka Braveheart, is a friend of the condemned. She can be reached through [www.amandla.org](http://www.amandla.org).*

## 14 RACE TRAITOR

was so disgusted with myself and still I sat silent! My hands were dripping with blood from the wound of my soul. I was unaware of my pain.

My next five pieces of silver came from the United States Government. In the name of “humanitarianism,” I watched as President Clinton bombed Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq repeatedly, and then Yugoslavia massively. I watched as the U.S. supported proxy wars in Angola, Colombia, and various other places. I supported U.S. forces deployed on every continent and ocean, with 300 major overseas support bases. I supported this all in the name of peace, democracy, and humanitarianism; all to defend unspecified “U.S. national interests” abroad, all to keep the American people safe from would-be adversaries who supposedly are just waiting to pounce upon us. I glued the eyes to my pain, for the illusion to abstain. It sickened me and the best thing I could do was drink more beer and buy more toys and just numb out! I mind-fucked my soul out into the world of hate and despair again, and again, and again...

For my last five pieces of silver, I sold my own heart, killing it with the idea of “romantic love.” But little did I know about love. Everything I knew about love I had learnt, copied, made up for myself. What I copied, I copied from a system where sex (love) is sold as a type of consumerism, or status. I learnt a hatred for my physical appearance, where I tortured and judged myself physically inadequate, and hence insufficiently loveable. Because appearance sells, love became a matter of appearance. I had finally learnt to hate not only all those others, but myself included. I learnt that hate for others is essentially hate for myself. I was eating my own excrement, and did not even know it! I had sold myself, and I knew I had nothing left to share, except pain.

Having gained my thirty pieces of silver, I realized I had sold my soul, my vote and my voice, to my own ignorance and certainty in my beliefs. I couldn’t find my ass with both hands, a telescope and a AAA celestial map with explicit directions! Who was I? I had been persuaded to feel ashamed of myself, to be dependent on external judgements and authorities. I had abandoned my capacity for creative, independent thought and coherent understanding. I had abandoned my ability to stand with strength, understanding and independence in love. I had been seeking strength, solutions, coherence, and affirmation in the only place I had ever been told to look for them—outside myself.



I woke up, spent and broken, not a fucking clue who "I" really was, except as I had been defined by governments (white), corporations (consumer), and everyone else. The only thing left I had to lose were a few illusions about illusions. I discarded every certainty I had ever had, including the idea that there ever is certainty about anything. I decided to find out what worked for me! Who was I? What was I on this planet for? Did I have the courage to be true to myself? I decided to give voice to the vote of my soul, by loving myself enough to find my own answers, to ask my own questions, stand for my own principles, and not be afraid to change my mind. To learn to live in harmony with me, even if that meant the world would brand me an outcast. I learnt that my hope is truth. I must seek the truth about myself, and especially about my cherished beliefs, for my most cherished beliefs may be my worst enemy, my solutions may be my problems, my hope may be my despair, my virtue may be my vice. (This applies to everything written here as it does to everything else.) I must seek to understand, trusting in truth and life and death, skeptical of all certainty, including about truth and life and death. Confused? Again, and again...

First, I submitted a letter to the Register for Reconciliation, taking responsibility for the awful crimes that were committed in my name, and for my benefit, irrespective of whether I knew or asked for them to be committed. And I made reparations and appealed to other white South Africans to do the same. I donated my future inheritance (a quarter of my parents' farm) to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I met my nanny, my family, told them about my guilt and my innocence, my truths, my lies, my pain and my shame. I wept, forgave myself and wept again.

Next, I faced my fear of conformity in the name of mass production and mass consumption. I stopped working like a robot addicted to conformity. I got fired plenty times for speaking up for other sheeple. I started thinking whether I wanted to live my life as I was being told to do, or as my soul wanted. I sold, or gave away my toys. I used public transit systems. I bought green, and I started to protest. I started to get back my harmony with nature and myself, and learnt to tell the truth about my fears, my hopes, and my wants. The nature of the love for myself and my brethren (including those I had feared before) bloomed in my heart like flowers in the desert after rain. I wept and laughed and wept for all the pain, and so much to gain, in forgiving again and again.





# JOHN BROWN AND THE MILITIA

*Race Traitor* 5 (Winter 1996) carried an editorial, “Aux Armes! Formez vos bataillons!” (“To arms! Form your battalions!”). It was a critique of the near-universal tendency of the “Left” to adopt the same posture as the government toward the militia movements. Left-wing groups denounced us for overlooking the “racist,” “right-wing” character of the militia movement. (For a sample of the attacks and our replies, see *Race Traitor* 6 and 7.)

In the editorial we noted that “Michigan, home of reputedly the strongest militia in the country, was the scene of one of Jesse Jackson’s greatest electoral triumphs, and we bet that many militia members voted for him in 1988. Wherever they stand now, they could not have been motivated principally by white supremacy.”

We wrote the above words without any specific knowledge, based simply on our class instincts. Now comes an article in the Boston *Globe* of May 14, 2001 recounting the distrust in militia ranks of the official story on Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City bombing. One of the people interviewed is Anthony Liuzzo, described as a leader of the Michigan Militia Corps of Wolverines. Liuzzo’s name may be unfamiliar to younger readers; his mother was Viola Liuzzo, who took part in the 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery civil rights march and was assassinated by the KKK afterwards. Anthony says he learned that one of the men charged with the crime, but never convicted, was a paid FBI informant. He and his four brothers and sisters sued the government, but lost the case and were ordered to pay \$80,000 in court costs.

The *Globe* article reports that several years ago, Liuzzo bought a shortwave radio at a flea market and began listening to militia broadcasts. Soon he and his wife, Suzanne, packed up and settled on twelve acres of woods, where they fish and hunt. “Our adult children first thought we were right-wing wackos,” says Suzanne, “but I think they are starting to come around.”

In the photo accompanying the article, Liuzzo is wearing a John Brown T-shirt.

# RACE BEHIND BARS

**Editors' note.** *Race Traitor* 8 (Winter 1998) carried an article by Staughton Lynd entitled "Black and White and Dead All Over" about the so-called riot at the Southern Ohio Correctional Facility in Lucasville, Ohio in April 1993. The article emphasized the extent to which black and white prisoners overcame racial antagonism to present a united front to the prison authorities. A reader replied. The editors asked Staughton to write a response. What follows is the letter from the reader, Staughton's response, and a comment by the editors. **First the letter from the reader:**

I just read about George Skatzes and the prison riot. I think this should in itself make self-evident the importance of pride in one's own race, be it white, black or other, as well as the importance of unification of all races against our oppressive system. The reason why George Skatzes, a white, and a member of a white pride organization, was so severely punished is because he didn't fall into the trap of divide and conquer, he kept his white pride, and joined hands with his black brothers in their own pride as well, and together they made a brave stand against the system that seeks to have them hate and kill each other in the name of racial hatred.

I find it contradictory that you [this refers to *Race Traitor*] would preach hatred of the white race, and take the same stand as the oppressors who wish to divide and conquer all races by this kind of attitude. You have a perfect example here in your own published article of the "Black and White and Dead All Over," yet you yourselves miss the entire point of that article in your preaching of hatred against whites. If those heroes in that prison uprising, both black and white, were to listen to this website's ideology, they would most certainly have been killing each other off just as the system whose ultimate goal is total slavery and control of all humans would want it, rather than see all humans, proud of their race or not, unite and fight them together. You people better get with the program, and realize that every race has the right to be proud, every race has shameful deeds in their past, and every race's only hope is to be both proud and proud enough to accept each other, faults included.

**Staughton's response:** It has taken me a long time to feel able to

## 20 RACE TRAITOR

respond to this letter. Recently I have read two documents that seemed helpful. The first was the unsworn statement of a defendant in one of the Lucasville trials. The other is a letter from a young man at the Ohio State Penitentiary (O.S.P.). In the hope of stimulating responses from prisoners themselves, I offer below a summary of the unsworn statement and an excerpt from the letter.

In the unsworn statement, a white man now in his early thirties described his arrival at Lucasville while still in his teens. Before incarceration he had little contact with blacks. At Lucasville, when he came back from commissary with a net bag of purchases, black prisoners would sometimes come up behind him, cut the bag, and take his things. He stopped going to the day room after witnessing a knife fight there. Then one day some big white men came up to him in the chow hall, and said, in effect, "Kid, we like your spirit. But you need protection." He joined the Aryan Brotherhood.

The AB advocated racial superiority. The new member had a work assignment at the prison that brought him into contact with a black nationalist. It seems the two men decided that what they believed was similar: not racial superiority, but racial separation. As the member of the AB put it, when you have two men in a cell and one is into country and the other is into rap, it doesn't work.

The letter writer also came to prison as a young white man.

I have to say that I came to O.S.P. a stone cold racist. I wasn't racist when I was first imprisoned, but prison quickly turned me into one because of who was picking on me. I perceived blacks as "ignorant," "primal," and "pathetic."

Three years at O.S.P. has changed that 100%. It's the WHITE police, administrators and nurses who treat me like a "nigger"; treat all of us like that. It is *so frustrating* to live under such an intense, voiceless oppression; to be picked on just because I'm an inmate; to be pushed and harassed, physically, while I'm in full restraints, and to be antagonized non-stop.

I used to be proud of white historical domination, the way whites just crushed and conquered all who stood in their path historically. The European race was a juggernaut of conquest.

But now when I watch documentaries on PBS like "Conquistadors" or "The West" it makes me mad because in

those conquests and legal genocides I now see the arrogance of Lt. C----- or Lt. C----- or the administrators at O.S.P., with the blind assumption of superiority by all the frontiersmen/conquistadors/correctional officers. It's the same mentality really. Nothing on this planet has equalled the juggernaut force of white violence, ingenuity, conquest and superiority-through-numbers moving in coordination, but in that there was an *ignorance* that led to the death of millions and the extinction of entire cultures and animal species. And this continues still today.

I guess living under this O.S.P. stuff has sapped my view of white nobility and made me realize just how impossible it is to fight the entrenched administration (on all levels of life) of an established majority. It makes me respect the Indians who fought to the death when the white man just wrote up a document (manifest destiny) which made it perfectly legal to annihilate the Indians; or the Incan/Aztec natives who stood up to the conquistadors (and were mauled as a society); or the slaves who found the courage to revolt, knowing that there was no real win to be had except self satisfaction.

That's not to say I'm a bleeding heart liberal now, but I have a new perspective now when I see black ignorance because I see "the machine" that maintains that level of oppression and ignorance on others; I see how the foot is on the necks of second class citizens; how the whole set-up is impossible to defeat until the entire administration of all levels (president, judges, police, etc.) has been renewed by several generations. Sadly, I fear that whites will have a tough time once that overhaul takes place.

The honest reporting of these two men suggests the following to me:

1. Many young whites who are imprisoned have had relatively little experience with blacks on the street.
2. In prison, the young white man finds himself in a situation where whites do not outnumber blacks eight to one (as in the United States as a whole) but (as in the Ohio prison system) blacks and whites are approximately equal in number. Moreover, in the prison system blacks may occupy more important administrative posts, relative to whites, than they would be likely to hold outside the walls. At the

## 22 RACE TRAITOR

time of the Lucasville uprising the director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, the Lucasville warden, and the Lucasville deputy warden, were all black.

3. This combination of circumstances may cause such young white men, when they experience harassment from black prisoners, to become more racist than they were before incarceration and to join a whites-only group for protection.

4. From the point of view of the black prisoner, in contrast, the white oppression that existed before he went to prison continues behind the walls. Most of the guards are white. The prisoners killed by guards at Lucasville in the years leading up to the disturbance were all black.

5. In the long run, the common oppression experienced by black and white prisoners may cause them to join together in resisting the authorities.

6. It can be a step toward such a common front for white and black “gangs” to enter into agreements to settle disputes without violence, to make joint demands on the prison system, and the like. At this point, the ideology of both groups will likely be: you respect our autonomy, we will respect yours. Thus at Lucasville both whites and blacks opposed forced interracial celling.

7. Ultimately, prisoners stand together against dehumanizing treatment not as blacks or whites, but as human beings. The qualities all prisoners respect are: courage; the ability to “maintain,” to “stay strong”; respect for oneself and for others; refusal to snitch. Not all prisoners display these qualities, and those who do are not all of one skin color.

8. As the process unfolds, black and white prisoners—like the young white man in his letter—will begin to feel solidarity not only with each other, but with people outside prison who are struggling against the same oppressive system: for example, rank-and-file workers; farmers displaced from their land in the Third World; Puerto Ricans struggling for self-determination; young people protesting the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization.

What do you think?

**Editors' comment.** We think Staughton's response is a good one as far as it goes. Where black and white share a common



condition, both can reject ideas of racial supremacy as tools of the oppressor and join together in a struggle for common ends. As the writer quoted by Staughton points out, white pride cannot be separated from white conquest and genocide, and its rejection is therefore part of creating a common front.

But bad ideas are not the source of the race problem. In America even down-and-out whites have an edge over blacks as a result of the advantages accumulated in the past. Even if old-fashioned racial discrimination were to disappear entirely, someone whose grandfather had formal education or a trade would still be in a better position in the rat-race than someone whose grandfather walked behind a mule. Hence a common front against common oppression is not enough. It is necessary to go further, to look for struggles that directly address the gap between black and white. *Whites will never be able to take part fully in a proletarian revolution until they demonstrate their willingness to go through what the black workers have gone through.* Does this mean that whites should volunteer for the worst jobs and neighborhoods, to be beaten by cops, sent to prison at the same rate as black people, etc.? Of course not. It means that they must act on the old admonition, *An injury to one is an injury to all*, and fight as hard against the oppression of black people as if it were happening to them (which in a sense it is). Acting that way will mark them as race traitors, jeopardize their ability to draw upon the advantages of the white skin, and call into question their membership in the white race. But it will also open the door to their own emancipation.

# LONELY PRIVILEGE IN DESPAIR

BY RICH GIBSON

## Tales Out of School

**T**here is no fluoride in the water in San Diego. Fluoride was always identified by the John Birch Society as part of a communist plot to destroy the will of good US citizens to resist communism. The town that once profited from hosting political conservatism and the Navy as its primary employer now lives with the remnants of that legacy: grisly dental caries among children in an area with more than 100,000 youths without medical care. Overstretched school nurses serve as family physicians, but in "America's finest city" dental care goes untouched.

The Navy and the Marines still maintain a powerful presence in San Diego County. The defense industry is second only to manufacturing in the area Gross Regional Product, at around \$10 billion. San Diego is still port to 48 ships, 200,000 acres of military land, and around 100,000 military personnel. Officers complain daily about the treatment of enlisted people, many of whom are so poorly paid they are eligible for food stamps. The enlisted corps cannot find affordable local housing near bases.

The Navy willed San Diego another peculiar legacy: 31 million gallons of napalm, left over from fire-bombing missions on Vietnam. Napalm, primarily an incendiary anti-personnel device, had been designed by Dow labs in Midland, Michigan. Photos of naked Vietnamese children, victims of napalm running in terror, clothes burned off and skin peeling, triggered mass protests all over the US. Not long after the war, napalm became hazardous waste, stored in drums near the Fallbrook community, whose citizens protested the presence of the petroleum-based enemy in their midst. The last of the napalm was shipped to Texas in March, 2001, to be used to fuel energy plants.

One booming factor in the economy, drugs, goes unmentioned in Chamber of Commerce brochures, but the 2000 film "Traffic" makes the issue difficult to hide. Peter Smith of the University of California

*Rich Gibson teaches in the college of education at San Diego State University. He is a member of the organizing committee of the Rouge Forum, an anti-racist organization of school workers, students, and pparents, online at <http://www.pipeline.com/~rgibson/index.html>.*

San Diego estimates that the Tijuana drug cartel has an annual budget of around \$500 million.

Tourism is vital to the region's economy. The tourism base stills controversy, as it does in every area which depends on cheerful appearances for income. Says a leading local environmentalist, "It would be unseemly, outside the family," to point at the cost-cutting that creates vacant lifeguard booths on the beaches, or to repeat too often that the beaches are frequently closed due to sewage run-offs.

"Don't buy south of 8," is a realtors' slogan indicating that people of quality should not purchase homes beneath I-8, a moving border that slowly shifts north as the Hispanic, black, and Asian population grows in the south. Although segregation and poverty is not as glaring in San Diego as it is in many northern industrial cities, it is still in force, at every level. Even in liberal wealthier public schools that encourage students to come from poor areas, children who arrive on busses are repeatedly reminded that they are visitors. 55% of San Diego County citizens are white, 9% black, 23% Hispanic, 13% Asian/other.

San Diego is relatively prosperous, or at least many of its citizens are. There are nearly one million families in the area, with an average household income of \$70,000. The city keeps its truly poor outside—in Tijuana. There the maquiladora plants replace the North American industrial work force with wages sometimes under \$20 per day. Families, babies in arms, can still be seen dashing down local expressways, surging toward hope, with the Immigration and Naturalization Service in hot pursuit. That pursuit reverberates into daily life for all San Diegans, as the INS sets up check points on major highways, exacerbating the massive traffic jams that already plague the area, and interrogates the occupants of cars identified in their profiles as suspicious. While the targeting is clear, it remains that the mass of the citizenry are all under surveillance. Even with purportedly severe oversight, the border remains a sieve of drug trafficking.

The former head of the Immigration and Nationalization Service, Alan Bersin, who made his reputation by separating people by nation and race, is now the head of the local school board, implementing standardized curricula and tests with the same vigor he applied to border-crossers in his last position. His father-in-law is a major land developer in the area, the good wife's dad standing in line to profit handsomely from the sell-off of school-owned property. The father-in-law is a big contributor to the Democratic party. His two key is-

sues: fluoride (for) and gun-control (for). In a recent election, area billionaires like the owners of Qualcomm, the baseball Padres, and a local discount chain spent nearly \$3/4 million trying to drive a critic of the land deals off the local school board. They lost.

The INS commissioner nevertheless continued his Skinnerian school campaign. The upshot is in part that San Diego area schools are extraordinarily regimented, marching children between classes, stressing phonics-based literacy programs and abstract Chicago Math projects, designed to drill kids and de-skill teachers. In-class reward systems that pile on top of one another to a degree that is hard to follow are common in city schools. Gifted and talented programs in most schools select the white and affluent, suggesting that five to ten percent of the kids in a school can be truly gifted—at everything, and they are better than the rest.

Key leaders within the San Diego schools used a number of measures, for more than 20 years, to mingle children who might otherwise never see each other. Camping programs, a series of educational tours of the historic Old Town district, magnet school programs, extended workshops in Balboa Park and its zoo, all at least briefly integrated children from all over the city, from its many racial and economic groups, in ways that most cities would envy. All of this, as the community knows, will lose funding and cease to exist at the end of the 2001 school year. In addition, “thousands of children, including children in kindergarten, will be retained in grade because of standardized test scores,” according to a leading African-American educator at San Diego State University.

Students in systems like this are fearful of freedom, unaccustomed to guessing or lively chatter, commonly whining and tattling—all symptoms that experienced educators know reflect deeper problems. Test scores that measure parental income and race fix self-worth for children, teachers, and schools. The teachers’ union has, for the most part, battled the commissioner on bread and butter grounds, but rarely challenged his curricular edicts. San Diego boasts that if the city were a state, it would be ahead of New York, Number One in the USA for test scores, although even the test writers admit that the way to raise scores is to recruit richer kids; teaching seems to only have a secondary influence.

Central San Diego is the home of the thriving San Diego State University, more than double its undergraduate size just ten years ago, and planning to become a prestigious graduate research univer-

sity. The campus is following the entrepreneurial lines of many universities: naming key buildings after big donors, and seeking more. One campus building is: Gateway. The SDSU president faced his toughest test early in the school year of 2000. A handful of students in a Native American organization suggested that the campus mascot, "Monty Montezuma," was offensive. Monty is the embodiment of the campus symbol, a caricature of a red-faced cartoon Indian, the Aztec. Monty, though, takes life form at football games when, historically, a fraternity boy plays Monty in red paint, chasing sorority "squaws," around the stadium, carrying a spear and spitting fire. At a campus rally, one county board member screamed, "If the students of SDSU want a fire-breathin', spear-chuckin', squaw-chasin' Monty Montezuma, then they should have him!"

At the rally, a lonely critic pointed out that, "there is no Mad Priest running around chasing nuns on behalf of the Padres."

Initially, the student government, after considerable research and judicious discussion, voted to ban Monty and the Aztec from campus. Faced with an alumni and student outcry, the student council backed off, called for a vote, and tossed the decision to the university president. More than 90% of the student body voted to keep the mascot and the symbol. The faculty voted to offer that the name Aztec be kept without the Monty caricature, suggesting that the name Aztec did not necessarily represent people. The faculty senate was, on the day of the vote, more than 90% white. The SDSU president, trained as a philosopher, "after much research and study of the matter of the Aztecs," decided to keep the name and to fob the question of Monty to a committee. Monty lives.

To the north, the city of Oceanside butts up against Camp Pendleton. It is a crew-cut city of tattoo parlors, check-loan agencies, motorcycle sales lots, and bars. Farther north, as LA comes into view, the public signs along the highways are strung with razor wire to ward off gang tags, graffiti, an indicator that the softer background of San Diego is fading from view.

Between Oceanside and downtown San Diego is Miramar, a huge military air base that, due to cutbacks, is not nearly as busy as it once was. The mayor eyes this area hungrily as a possible site for an expanded airport, a supplement to the local Lindbergh Field, named after the ocean-crossing fascist aviator. Nearby residents, however, include the NASDAQ investor crowd. They have launched a series of counter-attacks suggesting that the airport be located near Mexico.

Political life in San Diego is almost hushed. Candidates for public office never mention party affiliations. Few people know if the mayor is a republican or a democrat. One reporter who covered local politics related, "In most cities the people know the bosses are corrupt, and in some cities that makes them mad. In San Diego, they don't even know what corruption is. The bosses just file their reports as if taking bribes was not corrupt, and the citizenry just can't tell a bribe from a bid." It was a small scandal when a local council-person was driven out of office, convicted of taking bribes from a local businessman in order to gain her vote on a downtown stadium. But when she was removed, the project simply moved forward. The city officials never broke their deal with the football Chargers either: to buy every unsold seat at Qualcomm stadium, an agreement which cost the city a million dollars in 2000 as the Chargers charged for their mediocrity. Dick Nixon called San Diego, "My lucky city," visiting often. Ronald Reagan lives just an hour north.

The city government, apparently benign, takes no notice that gasoline prices in the county, fixed by a small cabal of energy-owners, range about 25 cents per gallon higher than in Los Angeles. The leader of a local consumer group, UCAN, says it is hard to organize in San Diego.

San Diego struggled out of a recession in the late 1980's by highlighting its existing base in research and development—and supporting NAFTA. The 1994 trade agreement tripled the export market for the region. Now, 8 million legal border-crossings are made monthly at the Tijuana station. Hispanic activists claim that an average of one person a week dies trying to make an illegal crossing into California. The movement of the free market does not apply to people. The hyper-competition that is the basis of NAFTA's outlook is seen as good for the region's economy. San Diego is home to an entire corridor of bio-tech companies and research institutions like Qualcomm (of Eudora software fame), the Salk Institute, the University of California at San Diego (third only to Harvard and Stanford in federal research funding in 1998), and Scripps Research Institute, focused on synthetic vaccines and autoimmune diseases—all engaged in entrepreneurial work aimed at combining knowledge and the commodity market. At every level, education is seen as key to regional economic development.

Near downtown San Diego is Balboa Park, home of world-renowned museums and a zoo housing, among other species, two

Pandas bought at a cost of \$1 million from the Chinese. The zoo is famous for making its fences almost invisible, providing homes to the animals in near-natural environments. The museums were the site of recent protests. Dozens of Christians complained that the museum's exhibit, "Torture Instruments and Their Symbols," was offensive.

San Diego's police force is hard to spot. The city, in 1990, adopted a policy of "community policing," meaning self-policing, and maintains a fairly low crime rate while employing about ½ of the police officers as other cities of comparable size.

Led by liberal local politician Steve Peace, San Diego was the first of California's cities to deregulate the public utilities, thus leading the way to one of the most massive transfers of wealth in history, what could be the entire \$10 billion budget surplus of the state shifting to millionaire Texas energy owners. A quick citizen boycott in the area drew some action, and brief price caps, but the leading local consumer advocate believes further boycotts simply will not gain support. The local unions have joined with the energy companies in supporting the rate hikes and shift of wealth, which they believe may benefit their members working on energy-related jobs. Heating and electricity costs in homes in San Diego in late 2000 multiplied by a factor of nine in many cases, forcing San Diego State students to leave apartments to quadruple-up with friends, and teachers to begin to raise demands for the next contracts.

Memories of resistance in San Diego are nearly obliterated. Few people know that the anarchist Industrial Workers of the World were big players in town in the early 1900's, that they led free speech fights for the right to form unions—and that they were taken out on the desert on boxcars and dumped. Many of them died. Few students are aware that one of the most militant student strikes of the 1960's happened at SDSU, under banners demanding affirmative action, military off the campus, and black studies programs. Nearly no one in town remembers that in the early 1970's sailor uprisings on aircraft carriers stationed in San Diego kept those ships from entering the Vietnam war for months, one not at all. History in school is a test item, not a question of reading and acting on the world.

The west side of San Diego County boomed in the last decade, primarily on the back of NASDAQ prosperity. In La Jolla, a wealthy community of cliffs by the sea that uses its local art galleries in preference to museums, professors at the prestigious University of Cali-

fornia at San Diego, once home base to Herbert Marcuse, cannot afford to live in the community. In fact, the local paper estimates that less than 30% of the county residents can afford to purchase local homes. The NASDAQ boom also blew up housing costs as high-tech millionaires bid up once middle-class housing, as an investment hedge. The brief spate of NASDAQ wealth did offer new alternatives to many San Diego area residents, for whom appearances are excruciatingly important. The local press is replete with ads from doctors offering their services to alter body parts, from hair to eyes to tummies to legs, to ensure the image of well-being. The image is likely to be quite correct. Few working class medical plans cover cosmetic surgery. Close to the ads for the surgery, though, are ads from personal injury lawyers, offering to sue for botched cases.

East County San Diego has a similar, but not so harsh, reputation as the area south of 8. West County gentry sometimes call the East County folk: Goat-Ropers, trailer-trash, meth-makers, haze-suckers (the air pollution that tamps down the horizon gets locked in the high hills to the east) and Klan-fans. East County is a much cheaper place to live. In Julian and to the northeast, it snows in the winter—drawing crowds of thousands of residents for a moment of snow-boarding, and a taste of hot apple pie. An Indian reservation east of Alpine is home to a small casino, usually full of unsmiling gamblers under heavy surveillance, and a discount shopping mall designed to look like a pueblo village, complete with piped in sounds of coyotes and desert birds. This reservation, like others in the area, now donates sports equipment to poor kids in the city.

South and west of the reservation, north and east of the city, lies Santee, also known by its own residents as “Klantee,” a long-time bastion of white supremacist activity and part of a school system that since 1999 has been home to a high school teacher who, with her husband and son, long operated a Nazi web site. The son is now in jail, for fascist threats. The mom is still teaching.

There is no center city in Santee; just a scattering of desert strip malls and a Walmart on the outskirts of town. The city limits buttress one of the largest city parks in the country, the eight square miles of rolling hills inside San Diego called Mission Trails Regional Park. Coyotes roam out from this park at night, eating pets nearby. The San Diego River, usually a trickle, runs through Mission Trails. Water rights, as a question of property rights, have underpinned regional wars since the Gold Rush. Park Rangers at the visitor center



welcome newcomers and say they wish more than 10% of the area's population would stop by for a hike each year. The daytime trip from San Diego to Santee runs under typically blue skies through the middle of the park, the road lined on both sides by the mountain ridges that create the region's micro-climates, neighboring domains that vary from seashore to mountain to desert. Santee is desert, only incorporated after irrigation in the early 1980's.

With 60,000 residents, and streets named Pleasant, Carefree, and Magnolia, Santee was seen by many as a suburban nirvana, upper-middle class and trouble free. It's about 85% white, 14 % Hispanic, 1% black. In Chamber of Commerce documents, Santee is portrayed as the site of the lowest crime rate in the area, "a solid well-ordered community...with elementary test scores in the 70 to 90<sup>th</sup> percentiles." In one Santee-based San Diego State University class for pre-service educators in the winter of 2000, a young white woman felt comfortable to rise and say, "Look, I am a racist. Racism has been around forever. So get used to it. Why don't you stop talking about racism and teach us some methods?"

Santee is home to many poor and working class people. Geographically and economically set up to be a racist area, the city houses people who also struggle against racism—and its cohorts. They swim upstream.

Santana High in Santee is home to the Sultans, presumably precursors to the Aztecs for many grads who go on to college. Santana High is typically California-modern. The school is nearly windowless. It needs a fresh coat of paint. However, immediately adjacent to the school is a fully equipped football stadium, complete with irrigated green grass and a full lighting system and stadium seating, not crude bleachers, but stadium seating. The geography of power for the Sultans is etched in the contrast of the stadium and the school.

## It's Only Me

**O**n March 5<sup>th</sup>, Andy Williams, a small thin freshman white boy who arrived in the fall of 2000, opened fire with an unusual German Arminius eight-shot 22 revolver, available on the internet now for \$55, in Santana High School in Santee. He killed two people, wounded 13 more, 11 students, a student teacher, and a security guard. Ensconced in a boys bathroom, a good defensive position for a shooter, he had reloaded four times. Faced with a one-man police assault, he dropped his fully-loaded weapon,

fell to his knees, and said, "It's only me."

In a phone interview, Andy Williams's former track coach said he was the kind of kid, "who would sweep the snow off the neighbors' driveways, who would run errands for the Alzheimer's patient down the street."

Andy Williams's Arminius killings followed these other white kids shooting white kids: Jonesboro, West Paducah, Springfield, Littleton. In some cases, the shooters lived in an area where open racist activity was commonplace. In others, they did not. Some shooters had connections with the NRA. Others did not.

Santana High, in 1998, had a California API (Assessment Performance Index-weighted scores for five subjects, with scores ranging from 200 to 1,000) of 636, considerably higher than the less affluent El Cajon High (526) and lower than the more moneyed Valhalla High (710). For comparison, the truly affluent La Jolla High got an 812. Impoverished Hoover High inside San Diego averaged 444. Test scores are consequential to administrators in every California district. Their sense of importance sifts down in the form of fear and greed. Schools and school workers are financially rewarded and punished by the state testing system. Soon, students will not graduate and teachers will be fired, based on test scores. There is little room to take off for simply being sixteen, planning to catch up in a year. This quantification of learning, which most know is based on inheritance, and regulation of the curricula, rooted in the politics of inequality and exploitation, strikes at every level of the school system, creating pressure and despair at levels previously unseen in US schools.

In the San Diego schools, the board voted 3-2 on March 11 to de-fund magnet and performing arts schools, in order to pay for the hundreds of students predicted to fail standardized exams in the spring. Those students will now be grade-retained, and forced into summer school. The money saved from stripping the arts schools will not be enough to cover the costs of the summer schools. The board is looking for other possible cuts.

Teacher contract disputes have been growing bitter in Santee and nearby areas. In Cajon Valley, teachers picket nearly every day demanding a contract and a fair wage hike. Similar if less militant actions have been building in Santee.

Beginning early in the school year, Pastor Gary Cass, a trustee on the Santee school board, held demonstrations outside Santana

High, holding up pictures of aborted fetuses and signs opposing abortion, accusing fornicating students of devils' lives. He was, according to his statements, frequently ridiculed by passing students. Later, Pastor Cass suggested that an atmosphere of contempt for life in Santee pervaded every move in the community.

On the same day Andy Williams opened fire, an auto accident in San Diego County killed three people. A day later, a child committed suicide inside Hoover High. The latter incident was deliberately silenced by the media, according to a manager at the *San Diego Times Union*, in order to prevent copy-cat suicides. The auto accident got third-page coverage, then vanished. Andy Williams's gunfire drew media coverage from all over the world. It became a spectacle, a commodity to be sold.

Contrary to one of the key messages of standardized high-stakes tests: ruthless competition is the key to success; several youths and a security officer risked their lives in order to try to stop Andy Williams from continuing to fire his weapon.

A 22-caliber revolver is a peculiar choice for someone who planned his murders carefully, as much of the media has portrayed Andy Williams. The Arminius is a shabby weapon, low-power, and not deadly but for well-aimed shots at close distance. While two people were tragically killed, a higher powered gun would have likely killed many more, with greater accuracy. Since Andy Williams chose this weapon from eight in his father's locked gun closet, it would seem that, accepting his internal logic, Andy Williams made an irrational choice. While concealment may have been an issue, along with the 8-shot capacity (rather than the typical 6-shooter revolver) Andy Williams had other concealable choices, and he picked the Arminius.

Andy Williams's father and mother separated, bitterly, about ten years ago, and later divorced. There are continuing court battles over his child support. His mother was in the military. His father accepted a job with a defense-related industry in the fall of 2000. Several of the previous school shooters had, in these instances, similar backgrounds, including living in a milieu with a background of racist or Nazi activity.

Depression is anger turned inward. The people who have been abused become the abusers. Andy Williams, after his move to Santee, became the brunt of tormentors from Santana High and began to hang out with kids who call themselves the "burnouts," on a block

not far from the school where they shoot baskets, drink beer and smoke dope. It was at this location that, finally, Andy Williams' skateboard was taken, and his shoes stolen off his feet, by a fellow who threw him to the ground. This fellow was among the first shot in Andy Williams' shooting spree, giving lie to reports that what he did was utterly random. For weeks before the shooting, a depressed Andy Williams had e-mailed his girlfriend in Maryland, Kathleen Seek. He promised suicide.

John Schardt, a Santana high school student, had what the press calls the "presence of mind," to first photograph, and then videotape, the shooting in progress. He turned his tapes over to the police, became a CNN commentator, spoke on Good Morning America, and then chose to step back and wonder about what he was becoming. Still, John Schardt says, "Well, this may be my break. It could be a career in journalism."

On March 6<sup>th</sup>, the day after Andy Williams opened fire, the students and parents and school workers of Santana High were urged to go to the SonRise (sic) Church, where a team of nearly 200 therapists, some of them corporate grief counselors, had been hired to intervene between the students and real community grief. The corporate grief counselors come from at least two different companies that have been formed since these school shootings popped up. Capital's replacements for feudalism's priests, they complained about having to vie for a meager pool of public funds. There are 12 school counselors for the 1900 students of Santana High.

Santana High and its principal, Karen Degischer, were prepared for Andy Williams. There was a written plan in place. It included the grief counselors, a SWAT approach pre-tested by the police, staging areas, and a federal guidebook on, not just school violence, but school shootings. The district had received nearly \$1 million in state funding to prepare and prevent school violence. Two educators had attended workshops in 2000 on managing the school in case of a shooting. Degischer has an excellent reputation in the community as a caring and concerned educator, interested in curriculum, instruction, and the learning community. According to the plan, she immediately made herself available to parents and students, circulated a letter to them, and remained available throughout the week.

The school front on March 6<sup>th</sup> was quickly lined for two city blocks by huge TV vans and trucks, spearing up into the sky with a variety of antennae. Huge traffic jams surrounded the school. The

fences of the school were covered with large prayer banners from Christian sects, and even the three competing local Christian schools. Each proclaimed God's concern. Flower shops did a booming business and dead flowers lined one fence by the school. Children hung out on nearby corners, making themselves available for unparked members of the press.

One radio station carried a program produced by 'professional' kid-shooter-spothers who urged people to take note of young people who are being picked on, as adults and others should be wary of them, and perhaps authorities should be notified about people who prefer to be alone, and are teased, as they may pose a threat to the school community.

The Mayor urged people to pray for Santee. The populace soon grew angry at the media and tried to drive them off by running honking car caravans past the media trucks, making it nearly impossible to broadcast. The citizens began to scream at reporters who tried to interview them. Many residents vehemently expressed hatred for the reporters, and even a university researcher, saying that, "They are just here to make us look bad." One older man in a tailored suit said, "Property values here are tied to our image, and they are destroying it." The community appeared ready to circle the wagons. In a meeting closed to the public in a nearby church, one citizen told a researcher that a part of the discussion was to seek guidance from God, and to stop speaking to the press. However, some students continued to pose for interviews. One, a Brittany Spears look-alike, smiled through tears at a line of reporters waiting for her words, as her heavier and less marketable classmates walked by unnoticed.

Each morning, students and local ministers held prayer vigils on the property fronting Santana High. Teachers, who do not enjoy the historians' luxury of a ten-year wait before analysis and action begins, sought to reach out to their students, to try to bridge the fear and anger that many clearly felt. One teacher told a researcher, "There are so many gaps between us now, so many divisions, that it is hard to have a trusting relationship with a kid. And they can't trust us either. This was not what I wanted when I started to teach."

On the morning of March 7<sup>th</sup>, Wednesday, a huge simulated card, folded but open in two parts, appeared on the fence in front of Santana High. It read, on one side, "From the students of Santana High to God: How could you let this happen in our school?" On the other side: "To the Santana Students from God: I am not allowed in your

school.” The next day a fourteen year old girl opened fire in a Catholic school in Pennsylvania. Bishop James Timlin of Scranton, who is a pilot, flew into the Williamsport airport in his private plane to console relatives.

Two thousand teens commit suicide every year in the US. In Michigan and California the incidence of teen suicide has tripled since 1995. In the week of March 7<sup>th</sup> 2001, more than 50 fires were set in the Oakland California school system. In San Diego that week, 124 death and bomb threats were received in various parts of the school system, tracked by the internal police force. Testing on one of several California standardized tests began the week of March 12, with some freshmen segregated for four hours, taking exams that could determine, already, whether or not they will graduate.

Estimates are that Andy Williams will get about 90 years in prison. Under a new California law, he will be tried as an adult, but he cannot get the death sentence. He will, if the police are correct, get 25 years for each of the deaths, and another 40 for a series of gun charges. He has little to bargain with but his youth and his mental state.

At his arraignment, Andy Williams appeared in court in an orange prison jumpsuit. He kept his eyes down, only occasionally glancing up at the judge. His father could not afford an attorney, so he was represented by a public defender who had not had the foresight to put his client in a child’s suit, or even a t-shirt. Andy Williams’s lawyer did not raise the question of bail, so the prosecutor, feeling a need to preserve the procedure, suggested that the judge ask the defense attorney about it. The judge asked the PD if he wanted bail for his client. The PD simply said, “No.” He did not point to the freshman Andy Williams next to him and point his finger to the tv camera and say, “This is an insane child and he should not be tried as an adult.” The PD said, “No.” Andy Williams was bound over for trial, likely to begin in late March. He shuffled from the room.

Immediately after his arrest, the police interrogated Andy Williams. It is unclear as to whether he was offered Miranda warnings, or if a minor can waive those warnings. In any case, Andy Williams is quoted by the police as saying that he opened fire because he hated Santana High and was frequently late, then locked out. He had planned to kill himself with a final round from his Arminius. He was aware that the killings were wrong, but, “if people die, they die.” Mayor Randy Voeple of Santee said that Andy Williams is clearly

mentally disturbed.

At least four youths were subsequently expelled from Santana High. They are alleged to have had knowledge about Andy Williams's plans. Never given a hearing, they were told they were being transferred to other, unnamed, schools and the public was told it was for their own safety. The public was not told that these students cannot return to those schools until next year. No students who were involved in the repeated hazings of Andy Williams have ever been disciplined.

## The Quest for Hope

**O**n Friday March 9<sup>th</sup> more than 3,000 Santee residents and a hoard of reporters, gathered at the SonRise Church for a locally telecast service for the dead and wounded. California Governor Gray Davis, the engineer of the shift of public wealth to the utility owners, attended the ceremony and offered a brief prayer. His wife, who attended Santana High, joined with him.

Dr. Folio of the SonRise Church spoke at length, in front of a robed choir of about 100: "Jesus said, 'Believe in me. I will come again and where I am you can be also. I am the way and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.' There are several lessons here. We all die. Death for Randy and Byron is happiness and peace. They are in heaven, a real place with streets of real gold. Imagine Randy and Byron arriving in heaven on March 5<sup>th</sup> and magnificent angels come to greet them. 'Come in! They say, and you can pick out a beautiful outfit!' And they get all dressed up, never looked better.

"Randy and Byron wonder, 'How did we get to this great place so fast?' And there is a parade of their relatives who gather around them and they approach the throne of God and God steps down and says, 'Well done, my servants!' (The audience burst into applause).

"The boys then say, 'If you could see me now, I am walking in streets of gold. I am in a perfect place. I'm with that gang of mine. If you could only see me now.'" This in rhyme with the song.

"Jesus Christ, is the ONLY way to heaven and the entry fee is Jesus Christ, who is coming back someday. We will see Randy and Byron again. That means comfort for us today, and joy for us tomorrow. Randy and Byron can see us today. Students I tell you to trust in the Lord. Teachers you teach the Lord. Do not leave this room without knowing Jesus Christ."

A cowboy singer followed with a rendition of, "I Can't Believe I

Can Really See You Now.”

One of the deceased boys had wanted to be either a stuntman or a doctor. The other dreamed of being an FBI agent.

ABC Channel Ten in San Diego had promised to carry the church service commercial-free, then to go blank for an hour so families could talk to each other. They would not commodify the tragedy. Directions on how to hold a family discussion were posted on the screen. The service ran one-half hour late though, so, promptly at 9:00 p.m., the station picked up with “Who Wants to be a Millionaire?”

On Monday, March 12<sup>th</sup>, the March Madness basketball tournament, the biggest gambling event of the year, began at SDSU. The school cancelled its usual academic year and rescheduled spring break, in order to bring the playoffs to the university. The SDSU president hopes to propel the school into academic respectability by pumping the basketball program. The basketball team provides no competition in town. There is no professional basketball team. It is important in San Diego to be positioned as a friend of those who own the football Chargers and the baseball Padres.

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, a principal from a nearby school appeared on the local NPR affiliate to argue in support of the state standardized tests. Confronted with a myriad of opposing data, including a local Chamber of Commerce report that links the test results only to income levels, the principal replied, “That is all we have, the standards that were established for us and the tests that came next. I have to find hope in something and I prefer to find hope in following the rules.” She added that getting elementary children accustomed, “to sitting still for hours, bubbling answers, is going to provide good employees for business, and that is our job.”

The 10 March *New York Times*, which covered Andy Williams and his lonely gunfire more extensively and with more sophistication than any local news source, carried an op-ed article by a neurologist attesting that Andy Williams’s brain was, like all kids his age, a “biologically immature brain,” and hence people his age are likely to open fire. The Associated Press of March 12 also carried an article covering Education Secretary Rod Paige’s comments, “Alienation and rage are at the heart of this. What is needed is more character education.”

Peter Yarrow, of the Peter, Paul and Mary trio that in 1968 sang courageously standing on overturned trash cans in the midst of tear-



gas filled Grant Park during the Chicago Democratic Convention, and the concurrent police riot, appeared in San Diego area elementary schools shortly after the shooting to promote a school program titled, "Don't Laugh at Me." It includes lyrics that go, "Don't laugh at me, don't take your pleasure from my pain." One third grade child, whose eyes would not focus in unison, was interviewed following Yarrow's performance. The youth said, "Well, I hope this makes it stop." The "Don't Laugh at Me," curriculum is owned by McGraw-Hill, a major promoter of high-stakes standardized tests.

The San Diego *Times Union*, managed by former Nixon aide Herb Klein, assigned its religion and ethics editor to the question of the repeated school shootings of white children by white children. Whiteness, privilege, alienation, and despair did not enter her discourse. Sandi Dolbee wrote in favor of several solutions: better anticipation, less guns, more self-surveillance and reporting from kids, cherish life—stop killing. "Try to be a little kinder." Her thesis: We are all together.

## In the Interim

In California alone, in two days following the Santana High shooting, 11 students were arrested for making threats to their schools or people in them. The NASDAQ collapsed over the next two weeks, losing more than one-third of its value. The Dow slipped below 10,000. Pre-service teachers in the College of Education at San Diego State discussed the impact of the stock crisis on their lives, and wondered if it was wrong to take pleasure in seeing wealthy investors fail. A few students noted that they were investors themselves, that they were losing all they had. One asked, "Does this mean that members of the tribe cannot criticize the casino?"

Fifteen days after the Santana killings, rolling electrical blackouts that had plagued most of California for weeks hit San Diego for the first time. The blackouts and skyrocketing energy bills, increasing in some cases by 1000%, destroyed small businesses around the state. In that period, questions about the cause of the state energy crisis began to be answered by court actions filed by public and private entities, insisting that the deregulated energy providers had deliberately created a shortage, taken huge profits, closed aging plants and crushed the unions inside, avoided public scrutiny, and used the legislative and executive branch of the state government to begin to syphon off a nearly \$11 billion state budget surplus to private pock-

ets. That budget surplus had once been earmarked for education.

California's school system, which ranks near the top of the states in the number of high-stakes standardized tests students must take, is 41<sup>st</sup> in the US in per-pupil spending (at around \$5,400), 45<sup>th</sup> in access to computers and 50<sup>th</sup> in access to school nurses and libraries. The average California teacher makes about \$44,100, 7<sup>th</sup> in the US, but the cost of living in California is extraordinarily high, especially so in the San Diego area.

In 2001, in the spring, California began to distribute money to teachers and schools based on scores on the Assessment Performance Index, the results of standardized exams. Susan Harmon, a leader of CalCare and an Oakland teacher, calls the API, "the Affluent Parent Index, a tactic to divide teachers and students, and to wreck good schooling." She has urged education workers to use, "the bribes to take ads in local papers denouncing the process so the community will understand." API scores do indeed resemble an economic instrument, not an educational tool. In the San Diego area those schools scoring in the lowest 10% have 93% of their students on free lunch programs, while the highest scoring 10% have only 7% of their students on free lunch. The lowest scoring schools have the highest percentage of English language learners.

After the Santana shootings, on March 21, the San Diego Education Association issued a newsletter, "The Advocate." The paper reflects SDEA's continuing battles with the school district. Director Robin Whitlow, on the front page, urges school workers to speak out against administrative policies that do not address, or fund, "the whole child," warning that, "we will see more incidents..."

By mid-March 31 children had been booked by area police departments for making threats against their schools. 17 were arrested and booked on school weapons charges. One of the most wealthy districts, Poway, suffered repeated school lockdowns and closings, silenced in the local media.

On March 22, I was in a teacher course in nearby Cajon Valley when news of a shooting seeped into my classroom via cell phones. My students had friends and relatives at the shooting site.

I went to Granite Hills High School shortly after the gunshots. Part of the Grossmont Union District, Granite Hills High, with 2,900 students, is located on a corridor of schools on Madison Street, a corridor lined by trailer parks, and one trailer-park-convalescent-home. The corridor houses, to the west, El Cajon High, a middle school,

and elementary school, then Granite Hills High. Kids at both high schools claim the other is the wealthier. Granite Hills High, according to a long-time teacher-resident, is, "a rim school, meaning that the higher up you are on the mountain here, the more you have; not like Mexico. El Cajon High is at the bottom of the hill."

Teaching and learning in the Grossmont Union district is powerfully regimented along Skinnerian behaviorist lines, each student's educational goals quantified and tested. For example, the district boasts these measures: "*Responsible Individuals*: Who succeed in a diverse environment as evidenced by satisfactory workplace skills and acceptable attendance as reported on the Extended Transcript. *Involved Individuals*: Who exercise rights and responsibilities as citizens to participate in the United States democracy as evidenced by a score of 70 percent or better on the American Government Program Assessment."

The school system is segregated, as most are, by a severe interior tracking system based on estimates of a student's literacy skills, typically a race-income measure. Only students in Advanced Placement classes are given competing theoretical perspectives in education; for example, in economics a critique of labor and capital as opposed to a consumer education curriculum. The goals and objectives of each class are explicitly linked to a specific state standard, and a test-each device claiming to promote critical thinking skills.

Some of the schools programs can only be considered bizarre. One two-day event involving the entire school, highlighted on the Granite Hills web page, is headlined by a skull and bones caricature and another cartoon of the Grim Reaper. The program, "Every 15 minutes," is described:

During the first day events the "Grim Reaper" calls students who have been selected from a cross-section of the entire student body out of class. One student is removed from class every 15 minutes. A police officer will immediately enter the classroom to read an obituary which has been written by the "dead" student's parent(s) - explaining the circumstances of their classmate's demise and the contributions the student has made to the school and the community. A few minutes later, the student will return to class as the "living dead," complete with white face make-up, a coroner's tag, and a black "Every 15 Minutes" T-shirt. From that point on "victims" will not speak or interact with other students for the remainder of the

school day. Simultaneously, uniformed officers will make mock death notifications to the parents of these children at their home, place of employment or business... During the most powerful program of the retreat, the students will be taken through an audio-visualization of their own death.... On the following morning, a mock funeral service will be held at the High School. The assembly will begin with a video of normal school day activities including scenes from the "Grim Reaper" and the staged accident. The assembly will be hosted by an Officer (Project Coordinator), who will guide the audience through the devastation effects of losing a loved one due to a bad choice.

<http://www.guhd.net/GraniteHills/StudentLife/Every15minutes/Every15minutes.htm>

The web site highlights photos of moments from last year's two-day event, bloodied and smashed students being carted off in ambulance carts—a simulation.

Teachers at Granite Hills have web pages. One social science teacher introduces himself:

I would like to be addressed as Mr. Carter, please. Thank you. I am looking forward to this semester. Relax. I have over nine years of teaching experience, spanning the military, corporate, and educational fields. I am a veteran of instruction. My techniques have resulted in zero friendly casualties in my military unit during wartime, record profits in the corporations I have served, and several passing grades for students who were previously failing.

Another social science teacher, Gene Kraszewski, who says he has a Cornell PhD in comparative politics asserts in part,

I recently completed a Masters in Forensic Science with an emphasis in criminal profiling, crime scene investigation, and forensic DNA databases. Prior to teaching I worked in the federal government in intelligence analysis and law enforcement.

Yet another, "Before teaching, I was a Judge Advocate in the U.S. Marines for 4 years. I practiced law for 14 years in civil litigation, taxation and estate planning."

Tim McMahon, who is featured on several teachers' web sites

who say, "I love Tim McMahon," says: "I coach football and track here at GHHS. If I ever have spare time I enjoy anything athletic and being outdoors. In order to be a good role model it helps to have good role models. I want to thank God and my parents for that. Remember ~ "Work Hard, Play Hard!"

One teacher, Joanne Climie, was a delegate to the Democratic Convention in 2000. She posts web-photos of a party she held for the Democrats at a beach-front home. Her union, the NEA, brought more people to the Democratic convention than any other organized group, to support the failed candidacy of Al Gore. Most of the educator force at Granite Hills received at least one degree from San Diego State. At least one of them serves as an adjunct in the SDSU education program. This is an overwhelmingly white and middle class teaching force, relatively well-educated, reflecting diverse skills, much like most schools. With all their diversity, such as it is, each of them works with the "Essential Districtwide Learner Results," a rubric which forms the skeleton for the state's common measure of educational merit: standardized high-stakes tests.

Test scores show that Granite Hills High senior classmates placed an average of 1060 on the SAT in 1998, while El Cajon High notched but 890. However, Granite Hills tested 30% of their 640 seniors, while El Cajon only tested 20% of 390. Granite Hills is a slightly wealthier school. Neither school measures up to the truly affluent La Jolla High on the flush Pacific coast which tested 85% of their 342 seniors and averaged 1106 on the SAT. The GHHS "Eagles" football team, which always fills the stands, went 6-4 last fall, winning its last game over Santana High's "Sultans." Granite Hills's currently most famous grad is Shane Spencer, a New York Yankee ballplayer.

The city of El Cajon is east of the city of San Diego, but inside San Diego County. In written history, El Cajon, surrounded by hills and mountains, was appropriated early by Catholic padres as a valley grazing land. It's really desert, converted to agriculture by irrigation, converted again by urban sprawl. There is nothing disconnecting El Cajon from the series of paved avenues that lead to the ocean on the west, and the open desert about 15 miles to the east.

El Cajon is a city of about 95,000; 70% white, 20% Hispanic, 5% black, 5% Asian. It's a young community, more than 50% of the residents under 30. By political geography alone, it's race-based space. El Cajon, like Santee, has a contradictory history of people-

to- people cooperation, often church-based, and the white supremacist movements that have deep roots in the Grossmont Union School District. Every student I interviewed at Granite Hills High was aware of Nazi and Klan-skinhead activity in the community and the presence of a pro-Nazi teacher at Grossmont High School, not far away. The Grossmont District, according to a long-time resident and San Diego State professor, "was recently seized by the religious right. Lines are bitterly drawn in the sand."

On a clear evening, westbound travelers along I-8 can see the sparkle of El Cajon's lights, about 8 miles from the sea. The location, between the city of San Diego and the deep desert, once made El Cajon a site for agriculture, now for small sales and manufacture. It's a deeply religious area, with many churches, many of them fundamentalist, and many small bars. The town has nine Christian schools. Auto racing is very popular here, noted in Chamber of Commerce brochures. While parts of El Cajon, like Fletcher Hills, are prosperous, most parts are not. El Cajon circles three zip codes. The median housing costs vary in a range from \$180,000 to \$240,000, cheap to mid-range for the booming area housing market. About 60,000 people per year move to San Diego county.

El Cajon's streets are littered with cheap fast-food joints, tattoo parlors, IGA's with little exterior lighting, auto parts shops. El Cajon is desert strip mall, post-colonial, even post-decay. There is an eery darkness about the entire area, partially brought on by Governor Gray Davis's demands for energy conservation. The homeless in El Cajon sleep in parking lots just off the main drags in the city. Some of them are aging derelicts. Some are kids. On a spring evening in a parking lot off First Avenue, a group of five homeless men kicked a drunken homeless youth who was passed out on the ground, stopping when an intervener protested. To the south, beautiful Mount Helix, a breadloaf shaped hill of moneyed homes arranged for views behind expansive shrubbery—and no sidewalks, looks down on El Cajon, and across to Mexico.

What is uncounted in the racial demographics is the presence of a large number of multi-racial people in the San Diego area. The intermingling of many groups in the area makes the choice of race on job applications, for example, a tough call. There is also a sizeable Chaldean population, predominantly Catholic, which adds up to one of the largest enclaves outside the Middle East, and Detroit. Some El Cajon neighborhoods are integrated, by race if not class, as are some

of the churches. At least one large El Cajon church, however, did purge a group of its members for being too far to the left. Nevertheless, there are many people in El Cajon with a lifelong commitment to their city, and to principled stands on question of race—and much of that is secured to a religious outlook of community.

## Gunfire at Granite Hills Shots Fired, Students Down

**A**t around 12:50 on March 22, Jason Hoffman, a white boy just 13 days past his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, started shooting outside Granite Hills High. He was armed with a 12 gauge shotgun and a 22 caliber pistol. He had purchased the 22 handgun after a ten day waiting period, according to law. He loaded his shotgun with birdshot, meaning that rather than have a relatively small number of larger buckshot slugs leave the barrel, a high number of tiny birdshot pellets are fired, with much less penetrating power. It is uncertain whether he knew that a 22 handgun and a birdshot load are poor choices for someone wanting to kill. Indeed, no one was killed. Hoffman never fired the handgun. 5 people were shot, including Hoffman, a teacher, and 3 students. 5 others were injured fleeing from the shooting. Of those shot, Hoffman was the most seriously injured.

Jason Hoffman was shot in the face and the back by an El Cajon police officer, Rich Agundez, who had been assigned to the school as part of a recent intensification of local security. The two had a brief gunfight just outside the school, the officer firing five times, hitting Hoffman twice, and hitting the 12 gauge shotgun Hoffman was firing, probably disabling it. Hoffman never reached the interior of the school building. It is unclear where the other two bullets from Agundez's gun went. In firefights, it is not uncommon for even trained combatants to miss their targets more often than they hit.

Officer Agundez was firing a 40 caliber Glock pistol, the new weapon of choice among many police departments. The 40 caliber projectile offers considerable stopping power, nearly equivalent to the 1911 Colt 45, and a high-capacity clip. The Glock was one of the few real innovations in weaponry in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Made of Tennifer finish on polymer and steel, the pistol was initially designed for the Austrian military. The Glock was originally seen in the US as plastic pistol, a terrorist weapon, able to slip through metal detectors.

It gained considerable fame in the movie "Die Hard," when Bruce Willis suggested, wrongly, that terrorists could smuggle it onto airplanes. Congress sought to ban its importation. But, since 1985, the Glock has appeared on more than thirty tv shows, including "The Simpsons," and fifty movies, like "Scream 2," "High School High," and "12 Monkeys." Beginning in 1988, law enforcement agencies and military operations all over the world adopted the powerful, ergonomic, Glock. Shot in the face, it is remarkable that the impact of the Glock 40 caliber bullet did not kill Jason Hoffman.

Granite Hills High School, like all schools in the area, was already under a high alert that was suppressed by the media. However, the entire community was aware of increased security and involved in discussions about security measures. Parents in the district, following the shooting at Santana High, met and rejected a proposal for metal detectors in the schools. More than 170 threats on schools were received in the county in the previous week. A school lockdown plan in case of a shooting had been rehearsed several times.

The El Cajon officer who shot Hoffman, Rich Agundez, is a cousin to one of the campus officers who were shot by Andy Williams at Santana High two weeks earlier. When the Granite Hills shooting erupted, SWAT teams were at the school in minutes, with a plan. Students knew how they were to evacuate, hands on heads.

According to Bernadette Roberts, a Granite Hills student interviewed by a San Diego Channel 8 newsperson, the school's principal, Ms. Torres, had been warned about Hoffman. Roberts says that she told administrators six weeks ago that Hoffman was an angry youth, dangerous, and that he had commented to her that he was "planning another Columbine."

Ms. Roberts described how, at the slightest error, Hoffman would smash his computer mouse on his desk in class. She informed the authorities that he had told her he intended to kill people. Ms. Roberts says she believes the school personnel should have taken action, been fully prepared, watchful at least, but clearly they were not. She believes that Hoffman is, "not a horrid kid, actually good, just really angry."

Hoffman had been grade-retained at Granite Hills High. He should have graduated in 2000 and told Roberts that he was very angry about his treatment by school officials. A student who wished to remain anonymous stated that Hoffman had been informed that he would not graduate in 2001, and that two days before the shooting



Hoffman had tried to enlist in the Navy, but was rejected. School officials refused to comment. The Navy confirmed that the service turned down an application from Hoffman, in part because of his weight and a skin condition.

A large youth, well over 200 pounds, Hoffman was isolated from the class of 2001. The San Diego *Union Tribune* of March 23 reports that, "he dressed oddly." Hoffman, according to other students, was living in a small apartment near the school with a neighbor-guardian who took him in after his parents separated and appear to have left the area. Residents near the apartment disputed this, saying he still often lived with his mother, Denise Marquez. Ms. Marquez did not answer her listed telephone and later rejected requests for an interview made through her attorney. A black student at Granite Hills High, a junior asking anonymity, said, "He was just one of those guys who wanted to do his job here and get the hell out." A white student, who also asked to be anonymous, repeated what many kids said, "He was a good guy awhile ago but he didn't want to talk to any of us any more. He was just always alone."

Unverified police reports say that the target of Hoffman's shooting was Dan Barnes, an administrator who was counseling Hoffman about his anger problems. Barnes's father, Darrell, had been a teacher in a school where, 22 years ago, another shooting had taken place, killing two. Dan Barnes, a Dean (for students "E to K") for less than three years, is a San Diego State University social studies grad with a teaching credential from El Cajon's Christian Heritage College, close to Granite Hills High.

The president of Christian Heritage College describes their mission: "All classes and extra-curricular activities are based on a Scriptural foundation and integrated with Biblical truth. The Bible is our rule of faith and practice and sets the standard for our perspective and viewpoint. Subject matter in each academic field is measured under the lens of God's Word....A special focus of CHC, since its founding, has been an emphasis on the biblical account of creation and origins (in opposition to evolution theories), and on the virtues of democracy and America's historic values of free enterprise, the work ethic and limited government." Prospective professors at CHC are required to have a missionary zeal and evidence of "obedience to God's Word."

Mr. Hoffman, like Andy Williams, had access to other weapons in his home, including a a potent Colt 45 pistol and a semi-automatic

rifle with a scope. If he had planned and trained, Hoffman could have remained in his pick-up truck in the school parking lot and shot Dean Barnes at a distance.

However, as Jason Hoffman approached the school on March 22, he saw Dean Dan Barnes outside and opened fire with the shotgun. Mr. Barnes, unhit, fled inside. Mr. Hoffman was quickly met by Officer Agundez. Shortly after, Jason Hoffman, just 18, was shown on television shirtless, twisted on his left side, his face mangled, dark blood pouring from his mouth into a blue-green plastic pan held by an attendant, being wheeled to an ambulance. Most of his large body was covered by a gray blanket, used perhaps to warm him, perhaps to cover the body shackles and handcuffs locking his hands behind his back.

Frantic parents seeking their children moved through a staging area, Kennedy Park, (not titled for the assassinated president) next to the school. They shouted their kids' names, and once united, paused at a small monument of two candles, a heart-balloon, and a message of sympathy brought by Santana cheerleaders.

Professional grief counselors arrived at Granite Hills High almost immediately after the shooting. They knew each other and most of the administrative players from their experience at Santana High. They began to plan a day to teach conflict resolution. "After all," said one counselor, "we do know that conflict in school is simply wrong."

A group of nearly 9,000 members of the National Association of School Administrators was meeting in San Diego's Convention Center on the day of the Granite Hills shooting. One woman, who refused to speak on the record, made it clear that she believed the source of the repeated shootings in US schools is, "the distance of the teachers and the children. Our teachers don't, or won't, have time for them." Ann Bryant spoke to the press openly, saying, "The teachers just must know the students." As is the case with most professional teacher conferences, the convention center exhibit area was awash with packaged materials for curriculum and instruction, and school safety, available for sale. The NASA membership, as observed at the exhibit hall, is solidly white, reflecting the make-up of the teaching force itself.

Granger Ward, the African-American school superintendent recently arrived from Manhattan who also oversaw the outpouring of grief at Santana, refused to comment on Ms. Roberts's complaint

that the school administration had been forewarned, as did principal Torres who, unlike her counterpart at Santana, pushed through a throng of reporters, refusing to speak.

At 4:45 pm, there were 27 news trucks at Granite Hills High, antennae towering into the sky, but still running. Kennedy park was thick with grief, and diesel exhaust. Reporters tracked down kids and parents and nearly anyone for interviews, and watched the basketball finals in their trucks during slow moments. NBC, which cancelled afternoon programing to cover the shooting, interrupted evening newscasts to assure viewers that the soaps they may have missed would run between 2:00 a.m and 5:00 a.m. Unlike the Santana High tragedy where two people died, all local radio stations but one stopped continuous coverage of the tragedy by 5:00 p.m.

Granite Hills's Senior Prom is scheduled for the night of June 2<sup>nd</sup> at Sea World, which offers, for \$41.95, "sensational high-energy events like our sea-lion spectacular with Clyde and Seamore with their own hilarious home repair tv show." The Prom is still on. When asked, one student said she and her friends will, "flee to Mission beach and get stoned."

This may be the last year that travelers can see Mission Beach from the road. Sea World, announcing a shift from its past as, "an educational institution," recently won waivers from environmental restrictions on seaside construction. The park will, in 2002, erect a 100 foot amusement ride, reaching into the Pacific. Sea World officials agree that the ride will obstruct views and be noisy, "but no worse than the traffic on I-5."

## On Target: Unfeigned Hope

U.S. schools are very safe. The children in them are in far more danger, intellectually, from the standardized tests that are demolishing their education, physically from the Coke machines installed in cafeterias, in many cases, to gain funds to buy needed supplies, than they are in danger from any intruder with a gun. Even so, kids are killing kids in schools.

The frenetic motion of the commodity market requires processes which drive people apart: exploitation on the job, alienation of people from their labor and from others by class and race, intellectual work made meaningless by disconnecting it from rational action, spectacularization in many forms like casinos over meaningful work, surveillance disguised as protection for the common good, a focus on

things over people; consuming and selling can overpower honest human relationships. At the same time this process is met by equally requisite forces uniting people world-wide through systems of production, exchange, and distribution. Underlying this tension are the lingering competing ideologies, "Every man for himself," vs "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," or perhaps more on point, Acts 4-4, "From each according to their ability to each according to their need."

The struggle for what is true within these contradictions, and acting on that developing understanding, is a reasonable approach to forging social justice; building caring democratic and egalitarian communities that recognize the existence of an opposition that is often ruthless.

This opposition has its heart and mind in a desperate commodity-market system ever on the prowl for cheaper labor, raw material, and markets. The market is expert at denying its own reality. Unable to tolerate the interaction of democracy and equality, the market deepens the invisibility of a Master-Slave relationship that remains as a good metaphor to explain many of our present-day social relationships. Confirmed shoppers and casino gamblers do not notice the cameras, or the people who worked to fill the designer bags—or the Man Behind the Screen.

People convinced to celebrate irrationalism, to pay for the destruction of reason, to choose to answer questions they cannot answer by a turn to superstition, those people are among the victims of history, the caged birds that build their own cages.

The key to understanding education and the movement of ideas in the US today is to grasp what the Master desires in such a relationship, and what the Slaves need. Above all, the Master wishes Mastery to be unobservable and when it is not imperceptible to appear inevitable, to teach the slaves that they cannot comprehend or transform their circumstances. The Master will offer the Slaves every kind of conceivable division, language, race, nation, gender/sex; except the key division: Master and Slaves. The Slaves, per the Master, need an inner cop, and a priest.

What transforms this relationship? Work, Knowledge, and Love, all interacting as they do in life. As Hegel and Marx recognized, the Master has no interest in labor (the relationship is rooted in the Master not working, but owning), the fullness of knowledge (mysteries like racism serve the master, understanding racism serves the

slaves), and Love (for while the Master can say that we should give peace a chance, the Master cannot live it.) The Master has no interest in movement, change. He is trapped standing on the slaves' throat. So, the interest of the Master is to promote: This relationship does not exist, nothing changes. The Master cannot Love. He can only exploit. His view of the relationship is wholly one-sided, top down.

In contrast, the Slaves have an interest in overcoming this relationship, intellectually and materially. Through engaging and examining the processes of work, and acting on deepened understanding, the slaves not only have an interest in transforming the world; it is the only thing they can do. Work is the negation of the way they must live, and it is the way they must live. The secrets of Oz are hidden inside understanding labor and sexuality (love, not exploitation), the key absence in most standardized curricula and exams.

Labor alone will not do. The relationship of labor to what can be revealed by understanding the social relationships that the unjust positioning of the Master and the Slave create is equally significant. Why do we work and he alone owns? Why does he use the government as a weapon against us, and then tell us the government is a neutral in which we all have a share? The struggle for what is true, like labor, is the impetus of history.

Labor and Knowledge alone will not do. Only the Slaves have a view of the totality of the relationship of the Master and the Slaves. Only the Slaves have an interest in not just smashing that relationship, but truly overcoming it, transforming the human condition in every conceivable way, from relations of work and intellect to the whole of human relationships. This is why the Slaves must simultaneously challenge the totality of the processes of exploitation and alienation, but do so with a community that can end the spiral by building a society that can love all of its members, from each according to commitment to each according to need. This is the advantage of the Slaves.

That is not a series of mythical abstractions. California has more stringent gun laws than any state in the nation. Complex governmental preparations were made for Andy Williams and Jason Hoffman, yet Andy Williams killed and Jason Hoffman destroyed his own life, and damaged others. Kind intelligent people are in Santana High and at Granite Hills, throughout the school worker force, yet a child shot other children. Communal surveillance is only possible in a society sharing common interests, yet every message of

everyday school life reverberates with the Master-Slave relationship. Slaves learn, wisely, not to rat.

There is no way out of this without considering the whole of the relationship of the Master and the Slave, no way out without also addressing it in its parts: Love, Work, and Knowledge, and building a caring community in the midst of an antithetical society. No existing reform organization in the US, particularly the race and craft-based union movement, is capable of overcoming this relationship, or especially interested in noticing it.

The absence of a well-known revolutionary movement, the notion that There is No Alternative, is a powerful buttress for irrationalism and hopelessness—and a key reason children are in despair. The children are not entirely wrong. It is apparent that even the winners at school have not won much. Andy Williams and Jason Hoffman were both trapped in situations with no clear-cut exit. The eradication of hope in the eyes of the youth is a project achieved by the success of US imperialism, the triumph of the commodity, the market, the spectacle, science in service to hierarchy, and technology designed to oppress. But this is a victory rooted not in popular participation, but in technological might and sheer force, and thin shield for a vulnerable Master.

In schools, now the centripetal points of civic life in the US, authentic community-building exists and is emerging in the form of an explosion of opposition to high-stakes standardized testing. Integrated school-based groups like the Rouge Forum, Substance Newspaper in Chicago, the California Resisters, the Whole Schooling Consortium, and the Whole Language Umbrella are all struggling to answer the dilemma: How can we keep our ideals, and still do school, still teach and learn? They try to organize across borders, in new ways. Action-oriented, anti-racist, and largely organized along lines that promote school worker-community unity, they shy away from reliance on mainstream media and traditional notions of leadership. They seek methods of instruction that demonstrate the interpenetration of freedom and rigor, that grapple with the internal interactions of equality, democracy, and the contradictions of inclusion and hierarchy.

These groups may form models in the struggles ahead. Winning is, in the Master-Slave relationship, going to come sooner or later. All of the conditions exist to fashion a democratic equitable society, to share—except the decision to act to do so.

# FIGHT CLUB

BY AMIRI KUDURA BARKSDALE

*After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others.... One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.*

—W.E.B. Du Bois, *THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK*

## Introduction

### Jack Blackcloud

What is this doubleconsciousness but the holding-pattern residue of the dialectic of master and slave? An adaptation to JimCrow unReconstructed limbo? Three years after San Domingo, in 1794, Mme. Marie Laveau, the mustee<sup>1</sup> Queen of New Orleans, was born; she popularized an AfroCatholicoIndian synthetic cultural form, but the next movement was one of sometimes-violent selfassertion in another strand of West hemisphere culture, the Afro-AnabaptistIndian current:<sup>2</sup> Denmark Vesey, Henry Highland Garnet, Nat Turner, John Brown, Frederick Douglass; all this time, there were those of the spoken word, who remembered *The People Could Fly*: these men and women kept Brer Rabbit alive. The lesson “for slaves listening to the Brer Rabbit tales” was that while “the rabbit provided an acceptable outlet for an overwhelming hostility,” it “could lead to self-destruction if openly expressed.”<sup>3</sup> State power forced the development of a line of folktale-clever fellows like Jelly Roll, Garvey, Booker T. and W.E.B., Armstrong, Malcolm and Martin, the blues and jazz artists.<sup>4</sup> This dialectical *moment*, spanning centuries, is the

*Amiri K. Barksdale is a symbolic analyst in the ideology sector, i.e., a magazine proofreader.*

American spiritual avant-garde, from which come voodoo (via the Spanish and French colonies), river baptisms, Great Awakenings, holyrolling, glossolalia, shouting, blues, rocknroll, funk, hiphop. We're still waiting on Legba at the crossroads, but white America gets badder<sup>5</sup> and blacker.

*Fight Club*, the best popular movie of my lifetime, is one result. This judgment is not idiosyncratic.

You wake up at SeaTac

SFO, LAX

You wake up at O'Hare

Dallas-Fort Worth

D.W.I.<sup>6</sup>

Pacific, Mountain, Central

Lose an hour

Gain an hour.

This is your life, and it's ending one minute at a time.

You wake up at Air Harbor International.

If you wake up at a different time in a different place

Could you wake up as a different person?

Everywhere I travel

Tiny Life.

Single-serving sugar

Single-serving cream

Single pat of butter.

The microwave *cordon bleu* hobby kit.

Shampoo-conditioner combos

Sample-packaged mouthwash.

Tiny bottles of soap.

The people I meet on each flight

They're single-serving friends.

Between takeoff and landing

We have our time together,

and that's all we get.

WELCOME!

This bit of freeverse poetry—delivered in masterful actor Edward Norton's deadpan, ironic, thoroughly whitebread voice—is set to mu-



sic: a Dust Brothers' rendition of Florida-bass booty music, the kind Luther "Luke Skywalker" Campbell and 2 Live Crew popularized in the 80s, in defiance of obscenity laws everywhere. Later in the movie, a clockbeating travel junket goes with the Dusties' reconstruction of the bassline of a 1991 Tribe Called Quest song, "Excursions,"<sup>7</sup> which itself contains a sample from the 1971 Last Poets song, "Time (Is Running Out)."<sup>8</sup> While this shows us what we're working with, the black-culture references are, as a rule, as mediated as *that*, so that they appear unconscious, cirrus-cloud transient, as subliminal as characterologically-expert Brad Pitt's Tyler Durden himself before the break-beatdown, the parking-lot battledance.

### Born of Capital Culture

This is not the first time director David Fincher has taken up such challenging material. In *The Game*, he directed a disarming look into the heart of the spectacle,<sup>9</sup> an "adventure game"—imagine a paintball retreat dropped into "real life"—psychologically tailor-made to allow Michael Douglas's wealthy character the opportunity to deceive himself about his life and its meaning; selfhelp materialized for a couple million dollars. In *Seven*, Fincher extrapolated bourgeois values to the point of negation, in the form of an ultramoralistic serial killer who thinks it his duty to impose that which he sees disintegrating, which inspires him to the plan of enacting the deadly sins he hates, forcing his victims to commit them, characters in his pedagogical drama. *Fight Club* surpasses both these in scope and intensity—it is a fully characterized cultural critique of capitalism, *both* spectacle *and* wage slavery, *both* culture *and* economy, simultaneously, whereas most critical cultural products can only do one or the other.

*Fight Club* is able to do this only because it is a rendition of that dialectic of lord and bondsman, and the resultant hitherto exclusively black thang: the postschizocatastrophic approximation of doubleconsciousness.

### You always hurt the one you love...

Self-consciousness is, to begin with, simple being-for-self, self-equal through the exclusion from itself of everything else. For it, its essence and absolute object is "I"; and in this immediacy, or in this (mere) being, of its being-for-self, it is an *individual*.<sup>10</sup>

The movie, based on Chuck Palahniuk's novel of the same name, which it far outshines, is set in Any City, USA. It presents the experience of one individual member of what, till about 2 years ago, was popularly known as Generation X, having come of age in the Reagan years, gone to college, and assumed his place in the nonproductive workforce, now consuming to his heart's discontent, confronted with his hollow, selfish, and therefore selfless, character. The unknown quantity he represents is at least one of the reasons the term fell out of use, why sometimes it's better for individuals to remain nameless; why it's better for certain others for "us"—"the people you depend on. We cook your meals, we haul your trash. We connect your calls. We drive your ambulances. We guard you while you sleep"—to remain nameless. "It was on the tip of everyone's tongue..."

Edward Norton's main character, "Jack," is going, at age 30, through a crisis formerly reserved for midlifers. This is less rare an experience than one might imagine, for the same reasons as those of midlifers: work, sexual frustration, inhuman relationships. Jack also has a sleep disorder, for which his doctor refuses to give him drugs.

At such a point in real life, you might meet an Amway distributor, armed with promotional material designed specifically for the atomized individual's sick desperation. You might be told that success is the great equalizer; that on the other side of the economy there is no race, color, religion; there are no hyphenated Americans in the community of capital.<sup>11</sup> Besides, you can't feed the world with poverty. You can't help anyone else until you put on your own oxygen mask. To do otherwise would be selfdestructive, suicidal. You need to learn *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

But in the world of filmed fiction, this clutch-at-a-straw is as foreclosed as real life: Jack above all needs to grieve his loss of life, sexuality, hope, direction. He needs to hit bottom, to feel his own pain, no matter how much Bill might. A friend referred here to Danny Hoch's *Whiteboys*: wiggers have no way to connect to their own rage, anger, pain, hurt, grief, unless they come at it through black culture; whites are not dissatisfied; whiteness *means* happy with life in America. "In a society where no one is any longer recognizable by anyone else, each individual is necessarily unable to recognize his own reality."<sup>12</sup> Not even becoming an Angry White Man allows the necessary selfrecognition, because they don't feel their own pain but blame oth-

ers for it. Likewise, Jack can only recognize his pain via identification with neardeath. The Last Poets might call this a distinction without a difference, though, 'cause if there's one thing about niggers, it's that it's always "almost like they're dead."<sup>13</sup>

Jack has been emasculated, and falls into a correspondingly womanish situation of pseudocommunal interdependency. After his doctor told him to go and see some *real* pain, he enters the world of life-affirming deathhelp groups, the only space in which he has seen the sanctity of human life and its remaining time to be respected: support groups for the prematurely dying, with names like Triumphant Tomorrows, Certain Resolve, Glorious Day, Taking Flight, Learning to Fly, Positive Positivity, and, of course, Remaining Men Together, the support group for men with testicular cancer, in which everyone has had their balls removed, Jack figuratively. This is the first group Jack visits. "This particular commodity is explicitly presented as a moment of authentic life whose cyclical return we are supposed to look forward to."<sup>14</sup>

The macho-entrepreneurship pimps have their selfhelp régime as well, but one somewhat less pathetic, no less false—"hitting bottom is not a weekend retreat; it's not a goddamn seminar"—but certainly less humorous. Under the false pretense that he is dying, Jack encounters people from all walks of life, on their way out; from all ethnic groups and from both races. Of course, Jack is basically a tourist, on vacation, checking out the scene. But he knows that he is also a victim. Otherwise, he would never have been able to set foot in any one of the groups, out of guilt, himself. He feels himself to be dying, if not physically, then at least in the Sylvia Plath, Tibetan-philosophy sense of the word. The spectacle of death makes his living death easier. The groups allow him to grieve, to cry, and to sleep. He looks forward to them. "Yet even in such special moments, ostensibly moments of *life*, the only thing to be seen and reproduced, is the spectacle—albeit at a higher-than-usual level of intensity."<sup>15</sup>

Things just get worse for the dickless Jack when Helena Bonham Carter's surprisingly potent and well-developed Marla Singer<sup>16</sup> stomps into Remaining Men Together. "It's cheaper than a movie and they have free coffee."

The direct, natural, and necessary relation of person to person is the *relation of man to woman*. In this *natural* relationship of the

sexes man's relation to nature is immediately his relation to man, just as his relation to man is immediately his relationship to nature—his own *natural* function. In this relationship, therefore, is *sensuously manifested*, reduced to an observable *fact*, the extent to which the human essence has become nature to man, or to which nature has to him become the human essence of man. From this relationship one can therefore judge man's whole level of development. It follows from the character of this relationship how much *man* as a *species being*, as *man*, has come to be himself and to comprehend himself....<sup>17</sup>

Jack is attracted to her, but precisely that by which Jack has been castrated prevents him from initiating a "normal" romantic relationship with her. Besides, he has other priorities: she is a tourist like him, "her lie reflected [his] lie," and he "can't cry with another faker present."

What is "other" for it [the subject, Jack] is an unessential, negatively characterized object. But the "other" is also a self-consciousness; one individual is confronted by another individual. Appearing thus immediately on the scene, they are for one another like ordinary objects, *independent* shapes, individuals submerged in the being (or immediacy) of Life—for the object in its immediacy is here determined as Life.<sup>18</sup>

Marla is Jack's indifferent other, not even a sex but an ordinary object, for whom there is no place in his "life."

Jack's figurative castration has not left him without a sense of humor: he is able to make fun of his feminine "Ikea nesting instinct," which has cathected his masturbatory libido: "We used to read pornography. Now it was the Horchow collection." He polishes his furniture instead of choking his chicken. It's his only comfort in his particular drawer of his "filing cabinet for widows and young professionals." Not only does Jack have a commodity fetish for FÜRNI: in the airport, after having met Tyler Durden of the Paper Street Soap Company on the plane, alive and "well" despite his wish that a plane crash had put him out of his misery, and just before he discovers his exploded condo, "a houseful of condiments and no food," a (metaphorical?) dildo in his suitcase requires him to be detained for security measures. "But I don't own a dildo" in the usual sense, although he was packing a substitute penis: his A / X ties, CK shirts, and DKNY shoes. Because Jack's condo has been blown to hell, he needs a place

to stay, so he calls Marla, gives it a second thought, hangs up, and calls Tyler instead. They meet at a bar, and it takes three pitchers of beer for Jack to work up the nerve to ask Tyler for lodging; meanwhile Tyler mocks Jack's misfortune, implying that Jack thinks losing his condo and furniture is as bad as a woman "cut[ting] off your penis while you're sleeping and toss[ing] it out of the window of a moving car." It was! But that night they lay the foundation of Fight Club.

The reason Jack takes such extreme measures to feel his pain? There are no other viable options. Jack never even *attempts* reactionary macho independence—not least because it's impossible. The strong, silent type is out of the question, Jack having been transformed into the silent, utterly destroyed type, demanding not the distance accorded noble souls but the most overwhelming display of empathy and support. There are certainly no role models. Don't all one of the modern Marlboro men live on a multithousand-acre ranch in Montana? Jack's father left when he was 6. Jack: "Married this other woman, had some other kids. He like did this every six years: he goes to a new city and starts a new family." Tyler: "Fucker was setting up franchises"—the original multilevel-marketing program, genetic licensing *avant la lettre*. (Despite the fact that she raised him, Jack's mother was never as important to him as was his absent father.) And Jack's "boss," for instance, a figure who in Dale Carnegie's time might have been an avuncular guide to the adult male world of action, life, and commerce, is a muscular, husky punk, with all the personal power of Tony Robbins in the womb, whose cultural fluency is restricted exclusively to one of the narrowest dialects of bureaucratese, and this in the symbolic-analyst stratum of the cutting-edge private sector, the dynamic financial-services "industry"—not even auto insurance *per se*, but the recall division of a major auto manufacturer.

Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged.<sup>19</sup>

Neither Jack nor Marla can acknowledge one another as human beings, because their lives and consciousnesses have been determined by inhumanity. Marla may not be a respectable young lady, but she keeps open her option to check out at any time and make her false pretenses true. Jack may not even remotely resemble a real man, but he can keep Marla at a distance. The world already has him by the

balls; he doesn't need a woman adding insult to the injury, like Marla did in the secondhand-clothing store. And although Jack is sexless, the exclusion of reactionary macho independence does not foreclose the exclusion of women or a kinder, gentler misogyny, that perhaps of the gangsta-rap-listening whiteboy, who would never call a woman a ho to her face, but can talk the worst shit about once-a-month-bleeding bitches when there are none around and he doesn't feel like sport-fucking. "Niggers fuck, fuck, fuck. / .... / They ain't fucking for love and appreciation."<sup>20</sup> Jack even describes Bob (Meat Loaf Aday's Robert Paulson, former weightlifting champion and now-ballsless former steroids junkie) misogynistically: "Bob had bitch tits." Later Jack says "You can't get married. I'm a 30-year-old boy." Tyler responds "We're a generation of men raised by women. I'm wondering if another woman is really the answer we need."

There is a certain type of small-group relationship among men. It can be very intense, sometimes competitive, sometimes extremely satisfying and rewarding; *it is something other than friendship*. At this point a friend mentioned the *Bund* mentality, by which men remain men together specifically by excluding women except in the case of a good fuck—"Niggers would fuck 'Fuck' if it could be fucked."<sup>21</sup> This was widespread among the hiking *Klicken* of interbellum Germany,<sup>22</sup> and one finds it today among young men and adolescents, especially young black men and wiggers, in "my crew," among "my homies," "my niggas," and, of course, in "the set." Zizek, trying to explain military resistance to gender integration, once put it down to group repression of homosexuality.<sup>23</sup> Among otherwise heterosexual men, this dynamic could only arise from the exclusion of the possibility of sex, i.e., women, which is why these groups appear *constitutionally* homoerotic / homophobic. "Niggers fuck white thighs, black thighs, yellow thighs, brown thighs. / Niggers fuck ankles when they run out of thighs. / Niggers fuck Sally, Linda, and Sue, / And if you don't watch out, / Niggers will fuck you!"<sup>24</sup> Jack's jealousy of Tyler's attention to AngelFace is a good example. Jack's homoerotic jealousy, through a convoluted selfrelation we have yet to develop,<sup>25</sup> is actually homophobia, which leads Jack to destroy AngelFace as such. After Jack has beaten AngelFace senseless and ugly, Jack and Tyler have an argument over what is going on in *Fight Club*. Upset that he has been left out of Project Mayhem, Jack pleads friendship: "You and I started

Fight Club together, you remember that? It's as much mine as it is yours, you know." Tyler asks, "Is this about you and me?" Jack still believes, even after he has helped to destroy its foundations, that simple friendship could be the basis of the group. Not to apologize for the Citadel and its mass-murderous function, but this is exactly the sort of conflict—personal relationships interfering with collective action—against which the ritual rearticulation of the solidary maleness of such groups is meant to protect. "You're missing the point! *This does not belong to us*. We are not special.... Fuck what you know! You need to forget about what you know, that's your problem. Forget about what you think you know, about life, about friendship, and especially about you and me." Jack's destruction of AngelFace's beauty is not only a violation of the rules of Fight Club but also his determinate negation of the relationship of man to man—friendship—, of man to woman—homoeroticism / homophobia block his heterosexual libido in the testosterone hothouse—, and therefore also of man to nature: "I felt like putting a bullet between the eyes of every panda that wouldn't screw to save its species. I wanted to open the dump valves on oil tankers and smother all those French beaches I'd never see. I wanted to breathe smoke"—*it's not just about masculinity*. Where there should be love indifference appears, converting heartache into hatred, the source of the hurt; all is inverted, and for now, like punk rock and gangsta rap, the Fight Clubbers make a virtue of vulgar negation of negation.

**You lookin' at me? You must be lookin' at me, 'cause I'm the only one standing here...**

There are two works that illuminate *Fight Club*—the novel *Reckless Eyeballing* and the movie *Angel Heart*, the one for which mulatto temptress Lisa Bonet got into trouble with the oldline raceman Bill Cosby—, *specifically* the master-slave dialectic in Jack's further development, in terms of the disintegration of the personality along the faultline of the man-woman relationship; they do this by reinserting the race problem. A third work will reveal just how far *Fight Club* has traveled along its path.

## Reckless Eyeballing

Ishmael Reed's *Reckless Eyeballing* (1986) is a brilliantly ruthless satire of the New York City literature / theater scene in the breakadawn of American postmodernism. Its dramatic engine is the accursed consciousness of Ian Ball, a black playwright from the fictional Caribbean island of New Oyo; his curse is that of Ham in a new hemisphere, catalyzed by multigenerational gender conflict among slave descendants: not only to be "black and elongated" like the son of Noah, but to be *doubleminded*, "a twohead, of two minds, the one not knowing what the other was up to."<sup>26</sup>

Ian is the son of voodoo priestess Martha Ball and black-nationalist Caribbean political leader Koffee Martin, a midcentury Marcus Garvey. The curse was laid by Koffee's wife, Abiahu, a coalblack woman, against Martha Ball, a redbonebronze woman; a lightbright / highyellow by comparison. "She and Martha were the only people in New Oyo with the Indian gift, the gift of second sight, but because [Abiahu] was blacker and had better public relations she had a bigger following."<sup>27</sup> Abiahu was jealous of Martha, and when she found out about Martha's impregnation by Koffee the night before his death, she spoke the bad word. Martha never told her son about the real conditions of his birth or that Martin was his father. The boy Ian—like the young C.L.R. James, joining Maple cricket club over Shannon<sup>28</sup>—was a sort of pseudoaristocrat, a quasinoble, riding horses and learning Latin in a postcolonial outpost, one of the few natives, like James, to be admitted into the educational ranks of a specially selected stratum of future state civil servants.<sup>29</sup> The specific difference of his curse remains submerged in New Oyo's all-black environment until, in the mid70s, Ian leaves for New York City, the land of opportunity, where he quickly succeeds as a slimy opportunist playwright, a satirical extreme much worse than Harold Cruse's Ellison or Wright, or even his "civil-writist" Artists for Freedom.<sup>30</sup> One of Reed's characters, a critic, writes, "Mr. Ball has a way of talking out of both sides of his mouth, as though he were of two heads or of two minds. When misogyny was in [back in the 70s], he wrote *Suzanna*, the play about the sugar cane worker who regularly took the cutters into the fields in order to pay her gambling debts and buy rum."<sup>31</sup> Whereas Jack was sexlessed, Ian was "sex-listed"<sup>32</sup> in feminist theater



newsletter *Lilith's Gang*: neither black nor white women can stand his play.

By the 80s, however, the "feminists," i.e., white women, have taken over the scene, and Ian has to adapt to Reed's fictionalized version of the PC circus of the Reagan-years artworld; Reed's raw material is the controversy surrounding Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982), and he takes great pleasure in the absurdities of race / gender authenticity-exploitation. Reed even explores the intraethnic conflicts among the white-women patrons (antiSemitic Establishment vs. liberal Jewry), although this is not most important for us. In real life, some Black Males lined up against a caricature of Walker and her novel, accusing her of race treason, collaboration with the enemy; some black-woman lit-types sided with the "feminists," i.e., white women, even going so far as to defend the caricatures. Reed shows us the "fellas" who resent the Walker figure, Tremonisha Smarts, and her appropriation of scarce patronage dollars from the allied bourgeois and petit bourgeois white women (the "feminists" and the old rich white women from Long Island and points north, with mansions, foundations, and lots of time on their hands). Tre is riding high from the recent success of her smash-hit Black Malebashing play, *Wrong-Headed Man*: "By the end of *WrongHeaded Man*, the lead villain has screwed his children, sodomized his missionary wife, put his mother-in-law in bondage, performed bestial acts with pets, and when the police break down the door he's emptied the fish bowl and is going after the fish."<sup>33</sup> Reed also shows us a black woman character, Johnnie Kranshaw, Smarts' predecessor, who, before Reed's story begins, grew tired of being BlackMaled into joining the "feminists," or else. (It's interesting that the two major American black woman characters in Reed's book have male names: "Tre" and "Johnnie" are Strong Black Women of Moynihan / Million Man March / Promisekeepers / Southern Baptist Gracious Submission folklore.)

The key to Reed's story in both its Caribbean and NYC settings is the man-woman relationship: in the first case, between black proletarian men and women, which results in the curse Ian carries; in the second case both between black petit bourgeois men and women, and between their patrons, white bourgeois and petit bourgeois women (some of whom are Jews), all of whom use one another in various proxy wars and sexual games in the incestuous NYC theater world.

For several reasons, even the venomous Harold Cruse was incapable of pulling Baldwin's card specifically for participating wholeheartedly in this sort of bullshit, even going so far as to attempt to justify his denunciation of Richard Wright and his *Native Son*<sup>34</sup> psychoanalytically, with the comment that every generation must kill its fathers. Ian has been doing the same thing, in relation to a composite Richard Wright / Ralph Ellison figure, Jake Brashford, who wrote only one play, *The Man Who Was an Enigma*, which was performed in the 50s and which was a little too corny, "universal," and accomodationist for the taste of the black-power people coming up when Ian himself came up, and much too naïve for the sophisticated pomo 80s art scene. "[T]he only reason they're still backing him is because of that long monologue in the middle...where the character renounces militancy and the end where that black guy comes out dressed in drag.... And then in the epilogue all of the black male bar patrons go off and register for World War Two so's they could fight Hitler."<sup>35</sup> Ian treats him badly, twofaced, and shabby, though never neglecting to drop his name all over the place in order to establish himself as the heir of his single-permissible-Black-Male-writer spot.

Ian also cranks out a play, *Reckless Eyeballing*, to get on the good side of the "feminists" and get unsexlisted. We don't know exactly what is in the play until the end, but we do know that it is about a woman for whom a black man was lynched in the JimCrow Deep-South—he was lynched for reckless eyeballing. We also know that the woman—then a slut like the one in Ian's first play, now a radical-feminist lesbian-bookstore owner—will go back to the town in order to give the black man his due-process trial 20 years *post factum*. They exhume his skeletal remains to try him in front of a jury of *her* peers, a jury box of black and white women, sisters all. He is found guilty, of course. Unfortunately for Ian, his producer, Becky French, is a white woman, part of the antiSemitic Establishment. She wants to humiliate Ian by showing his play in a second-rate house and by having the united white-woman Establishment's new "It" girl, Tre Smarts, direct it. French moved him out of the first-rate theater because she wants to produce a play about how Eva Braun, Hitler's wife, was merely a victim of male chauvinism. French has some problems with Ian's lead white-woman character. Tre has some problems with Ian's black-woman characters. Tre has some problems

with Becky, and is by now going through the same thing Johnnie went through before.

Reed mentions that Tre owns a picture by one of the "leading black Lower East Side painters," and he had to be thinking of Jean-Michel Basquiat in particular, *el otro de Dos Cabezas*,<sup>36</sup> who was also "half" Caribbean and, despite his aesthetic success and the explosive social content of his work, was roundly and pretty much rightly accused of exploiting what authentic ethnicity he brought to the NYC artworld in those days, to reinvigorate Warhol's quickly decaying husk of a nearattempt at pseudoart. He disintegrated under the pressure, becoming a serious drug addict with an obsessive compulsion to pick at his face in the mirror. Today Basquiat's friends accuse his "friends," those responsible for his success, of helping to kill him. He died of a heroin overdose at 27 in 1988. A Citibank art dealer delivered the eulogy. His memorial service was held in Citicorp Center. Afterward there was a party in a nightclub converted from a bank.<sup>37</sup> Under similar pressure, Johnnie Kranshaw, predecessor of Tremonisha Smarts, took to snorting *Scarface*-sized bowls of cocaine before she gave up the game and moved to New Oyo. Tre herself prefers prescription pillpops.

Meanwhile, one Angry Black Male has declared a war of vengeance upon black and white woman intellectuals all over town: he cuts off all his victim's hair, like the Europeans did woman Nazi collaborators after WWII, ties them up, perhaps slaps them a few times, and always leaves a chrysanthemum. "A Jew, Pole, and a black man arrive at the pearly gates and are told by Saint Peter that they can only enter the Kingdom if they spell a word. The Jew and the Pole are asked to spell God. They do so and are admitted. The black man is asked to spell chrysanthemum."<sup>38</sup> They call him the Flower Phantom. He wreaks terrible vengeance upon the defamers of The Black Man and their collaborators, the latter being black women. In *Fight Club*, there are MONKEYS FOUND SHAVEN and PERFORMANCE ARTIST[S] FOUND MOLESTED, but in *Eyeballing*, there is TREMONISHA SMARTS, WELL-KNOWN BLACK PLAYWRIGHT ACCOSTED BY PSYCHO and FLOWER PHANTOM STRIKES AGAIN and again. Tre was first, of course. Second was "a feminist revisionist who had written that all of the black men in the South who had been accused of rape were actually guilty, and had deserved to be lynched."<sup>39</sup> The third was a woman

who said the typical rapist is a black man, and finally the Phantom gets Ian's theater producer, Becky French.

All this time, we think that Ian is doubleminded in the way Du Bois explained; we think he is just a black man stressed by the alternating currents of amused contempt and pity, until, in the end, in a crescendo of cleverness taking only four large-print pages, we discover the truth about Ian, although he apparently does not. All he knows is that he hasn't had a good night's sleep in several days, but Ian is the Flower Phantom. He used to raise chrysanthemums as a genteel child in New Oyo.

Ian's doublemindedness even seeps into his dominant consciousness: strictly speaking, Ian did not even write *Reckless Eyeballing*. As bad as it was already, Ian allowed Becky French to make it worse: the black man's lascivious glance is morally equivalent to his lynching by the mob; hostile-environment sexual harassment = castration and execution. Ian gave up his creativity in order to get off the sexlist. His success was vicarious, and his attacks were unconscious. One is corruption, the other curse.

There is no solution to this; *Reckless Eyeballing* is a satire, a comedy of errors, a verbal assault on the pompous artsy fartsies who populate my metropolis and think they are important. Reed himself lives in Oakland.

## Angel Heart

In *Angel Heart* (1987), Mickey Rourke's main character, private detective Harry Angel, gets to see and understand his curse of doublemindedness; he appears to be a random victim, no victim of systemic prejudice and torture, no racialized slavery, or anything remotely like that—but the actor Rourke, like all of his characters, is obviously Irish, and thus an indirect though *implicated* victim: the Irish-studies-teacher son of Reed's cop character says "That's right. Be their Dirty Harry Callahan.... You're...the fists for people who spit on your kind... protecting their property by beating up people. You and your father, both mercenaries. At the turn of the century they used your father against the Jews on the Lower East Side and against other Irish.... And now they use you against the blacks and the Puerto Ricans."<sup>40</sup> In 1943, some wandering practitioners ran the voodoo down on Harry: one Toots Sweet, a black guitar player from New Orleans;

one Madame Margaret Krusemark, the Witch of Wellesley, white bourgeois debutante turned voodoo priestess; her father Ethan Krusemark, Louisiana old money; and one Johnny Favorite, who broke Margaret's heart, a white singer who had made a deal with black powers—both natural and supernatural; both the devil and Toots Sweet, who wrote his major hit—sometime before WWII to grant him his heavenly voice and crossover status—"maybe your soul you'd sell to have mass appeal."<sup>41</sup> Robert De Niro's character, Louis Cyphre, hires Angel, veteran victim of posttraumatic amnesia, to find Johnny Favorite, to follow Johnny's trail from Brooklyn to Poughkeepsie to New Orleans, where he encounters Krusemark and a historical gender conflict similar to that in *Eyeballing*; Mme. Krusemark appears to have taken the place of mustee Evangeline Proudfoot as the preeminent voodoo priestess of New Orleans, but Proudfoot, now deceased, was the one who bore Johnny's child, Lisa Bonet's Epiphany Proudfoot. Murder and mayhem, up to and including the murder of Epiphany Proudfoot, follow Angel wherever he goes, and he is the prime suspect. He deduces that Favorite is still alive, killing anyone who could possibly identify him or help Louis Cyphre track him down. Angel is not wrong: he is Johnny Favorite, victim of both amnesia and a possessive sort of metempsychosis. Favorite tried to get out of the deal by stealing Angel's body, mind, and memories, but Cyphre tracks him down regardless, to enforce the contract. By Angel's own mercenary efforts, Lucifer corners him into this epiphany. Angel protests that he knows who he is, but he protests too much. He recognizes the truth in Krusemark's vanity mirror.

This movie is incredibly reactionary, however strangely moving: its effectiveness lies in audience horror at the fundamental, irreducible injustice of the theft of a random white man's soul, literally *on (the devil's) account* of the cultural debt whites owe to blacks, which then justifies white resentment at efforts on the part of our earthly powers to improve the lives of American blacks. *At best*, the movie exploits a selfserving confusion over the source of "soul," as in American music, to begin with. Angel's soul was condemned to wander the earth, and although Favorite, via Angel's body and memories, tries three times to reach out to Angel's soul for forgiveness, Favorite is never quite able to reach him. Whatever the reason, the niggerlover can't be forgiven. We get only one look at the face of Angel's soul, and he is mad as the

hell to which both he and Favorite are going. *Angel Heart* raises more philosophical and social questions than it could ever hope to solve or even to clearly articulate: this is why it required the intervention of Satan himself.

## Godfather II

*Godfather II* was the last best movie of my lifetime, released in 1974, the year of my birth. Satan was secularized in the worship of Mammon, and the race question went underground, imperceptible beneath the veneer of ethnicity, hiding under cover of the immigrant tale: the tale of whiteness joined, the American Dream underside, corrupt and dysfunctional, the wages of whiteness, sweet as cannoli in the mouth but bellybitter. Coppola and Puzo made use of two consciousnesses, although on sequential timelines—Robert De Niro's Vito and his youngest son, Al Pacino's Michael Corleone—one attempting to make it in America, with work and then by hook or crook, the other the end result of these first-quarter-century efforts. No movie has ever more effectively expressed the despair at the center of the American Dream.<sup>42</sup> *Godfather II* shows the degradation of community and family, beginning with the tale of forced exile and émigration, ending with the heartache of fratricidal ambition in the land of opportunity. The heartache of inhuman, incredible cruelty. This masterpiece ends simply and quietly, with Al Pacino's Michael looking rather intently offcamera. What is he looking at? Who is he looking at? Coppola shows us onscreen. He is looking at himself, Sonny, Fredo, their sister Connie, and her first boyfriend Carlo, around the dinner table, back in 1941 after the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor; he is looking at how he was the first in his family to go to college, how his American education enabled him to supersede the rigid, old-world patriarchy with the concept of the nation-state, how he voluntarily enlisted in the Marines to fight in WWII, how he wanted to be a businessman, and how he, the best of his brothers, became a patriarch anyway, though a businessman as well. He is looking at his father Vito, leaving Sicily on a train.

*Godfather II* is the story of a single character: the Italian Ethnic. It is not insignificant that this movie is the first of only two<sup>43</sup> in which these two Italian-Americans, De Niro and Pacino, have ever shared the silver screen; like Wright and Baldwin, like Brashford and Ball,

like Kranshaw and Smarts, like Favorite and Angel, they occupy the same space *at different times*. This single place held, this single character, this single consciousness, this single history, undergoes a transformation, a revaluation of all values, but it is hardly liberatory for the macho Michael, the American superman, the independent entrepreneur, who finds he hates what he has become; he does not make his own laws but has become an enforcer of the laws of supply and demand; in the course of being strong for his family he has destroyed it, and this is not a question of the corruption of family values, but, as in *Seven*, of the corruption at the heart of the bourgeois family anyway. His quasi-incestuous relationship with his sister, Talia Shire's Connie, reveals the truth of the development ending in Michael's murder of his brother, John Cazale's Fredo. The whiteness to which Vito devoted his entire life forces Michael into a role in which he destroys himself and almost his children and wife, Diane Keaton's Kay. Not even in *Godfather III* does Michael relinquish his status, although he is finally able to beg forgiveness of a priest; meanwhile, his criminal machinations help to destroy the institutional integrity of the Church. Michael, an immigrant fairytale, a best-case scenario, is Midas.

## The Phenomenology of White-Slave Spirit

### A Twice-Told Tale

#### FIRST PASS

The would-be black *savant* was confronted by the paradox that the knowledge his people needed was a twice-told tale to his white neighbors, while the knowledge which would teach the white world was Greek to his own flesh and blood.<sup>44</sup>

Du Bois meant the *black* would-be savant, but he wrote something just as profound. Our would-be black revolutionary, Jack, confronts a different paradox, but one with similar results, because he is traveling the wellworn path of the master-slave dialectic, whether known as Middle Passage or Trail of Tears.

In immediate self-consciousness the simple "I" is absolute mediation, and has as its essential moment lasting independence. The dissolution of that simple unity is the result of the first experience; through this there is posited a pure self-consciousness, and a consciousness which is not purely for itself

but for another, i.e. is a merely *immediate* consciousness, or consciousness in the form of *thinghood*. Both moments are essential.<sup>45</sup>

Jack begins as a white slave. He has the consciousness of a thing. He is an object upon which the spectacle works.

Since to begin with they [lasting independence versus thinghood] are unequal and opposed, and their reflection into a unity has not yet been achieved, they exist as two opposed shapes of consciousness; one is the independent consciousness whose essential nature is to be for itself, the other is the dependent consciousness whose essential nature is simply to live or to be for another. The former is lord, the other is bondsman.<sup>46</sup>

At first glance, the independent consciousness Jack confronts is actually unconsciousness: it is the world of anarchic capitalist production, of which Jack is a part. There is no overarching plan—just an agglomeration of heteronomously opposed profit motives, *bellum omnia contra omnes*. So, while it cannot quite be called a consciousness, it is indeed *something* for itself: exchange value, toxic distillate of alienated labor, forever seeking new markets; IBM in deep space, Planet Starbucks, Microsoft planting flags in faroff galaxies. On second sight, Tyler is this consciousness for itself. In either case, Jack is the dependent consciousness.

The lord is the consciousness that exists for itself, but.... it is a consciousness existing *for itself* which is mediated with itself through another consciousness,...whose nature it is to be bound up with an existence that is independent, or thinghood in general. The lord puts himself into relation with both..., to a thing as such, the object of desire, and to the consciousness for which thinghood is the essential characteristic....<sup>47</sup>

Tyler can do nothing without Jack; Tyler is dependent upon Jack throwing the first punch in the parking lot.<sup>48</sup> Tyler mediates himself to himself as Head Nigger In Charge only by taking charge of Jack. Tyler is tied up with a consciousness whose nature it is to be dependent.



The lord relates himself mediately to the bondsman through a being (a thing) that is independent.... Equally, the lord relates himself mediately to the thing through the bondsman; the bondsman... also relates himself negatively to the thing, and takes away its independence; but... the thing is independent *vis-à-vis* the bondsman, whose negating of it, therefore, cannot go the length of being altogether done with it to the point of annihilation; in other words, he only *works* on it. For the lord,... the *immediate* relation becomes through this mediation the sheer negation of the thing, or the enjoyment of it....<sup>49</sup>

After Jack and Tyler start Fight Club, the various projects like Mayhem and Latté Thunder become Tyler's objects of desire, and he can only relate himself to these objects with the cooperation and work of the members of Fight Club, and Jack in particular, at least at the beginning, before Jack's contribution is submerged into that of all the other space monkeys in their social labor. Their labor becomes independent of any one of them. "Now, no one was the center of Fight Club except the two men fighting. The leader walked through the crowd, out in the darkness," enjoying the action he has set in motion.

In both of these moments the lord achieves his recognition through another consciousness.... In neither case can it be lord over the being of the thing and achieve absolute negation of it....<sup>50</sup>

Tyler cannot dominate Fight Club. Tyler cannot fight every fight, do every project, and therefore be lord over the being of the object; in order for the thing to be done at all, and for Tyler, the leader of the group, to have any enjoyment at all, the object and the consciousnesses working on it, must be independent. This is reflected in the cellular organization of the national network of fight clubs. But their independence is ambiguous:

[W]hat the bondsman does is really the action of the lord. The latter's essential nature is to exist only for himself; he is the sheer negative power for whom the thing is nothing. Thus he is the pure, essential action in this relationship, while the action of the bondsman is impure and unessential....<sup>51</sup>

Tyler is pure bottomhitting. Jack attempts throughout the entire movie to emulate Tyler's pure activity. "We all became what Tyler wanted us to become." But everything he does is somehow corrupt, impure. He's fucking pathetic; he tries to call off projects; he breaks the rules; he tries to change the rules.

[T]he object in which the lord has achieved his lordship has in reality turned out to be something quite different from an independent consciousness. What now really confronts him is... a dependent one. He is, therefore, not certain of *being-for-self* as the truth of himself. On the contrary, his truth is in reality the unessential consciousness and its unessential action.<sup>52</sup>

The inbred dependency of slaves everywhere, no matter the rules of their activity, the techniques of their work, the means by which the master tries, through them, to mediate his essence as pure negativity—despite all this, he cannot help but discover the dependency of his bondsmen. Tyler discovers Jack's dependency, and at the end Jack's uncertainty about his identity is resolved:

The *truth* of the independent consciousness is...the servile consciousness of the bondsman.<sup>53</sup>

It is resolved precisely through the dependency of the bondsmen: those Fight Clubbers who break the rules upon the strength of their personal relationship with their trusted master, and answer questions that were never supposed to be asked. Of course, the master is something different for the slaves than he is for himself; through him the slaves also mediate themselves to themselves, and realize their own essence, their independence of him, his superfluosity.

## SECOND PASS

That which structures Jack's life is capital, a global master-slave relationship. His immediate selfconsciousness is that of being an object. But his frustrated desire for human relationships, namely for a romantic relationship with Marla, creates the vague awareness that he has a self-for-itself, somewhere.

[S]ervitude has the lord for its essential reality; hence the *truth* for it is the independent consciousness that is *for itself*.

However, servitude is not yet aware that this truth is implicit in it.<sup>54</sup>

Tyler is Jack's implicit truth. Tyler appears implicitly / subliminally before he appears; almost invisible upon first sight, especially in an actual movie theater, several single frames of Tyler—mugging and clowning, in support groups, on the street, and in offices—have been spliced into the film. If you rent the videotape or DVD you can see these better. This is an exceedingly clever, three-times selfreferential joke. We experience Tyler in the same way Jack does, unconsciously, because we are in Jack's point of view. And the movie does to us what Tyler does in the movie. This doubling-up presses home the critique of our spectacular slavery, via the *détournements* both depicted in and performed by the movie. By inserting pornographic frames into family films, Tyler shocks spectators out of their passivity, reconnecting them, if even in a questionable way, to active desire and passion, e.g., sex. This is an attack on one of the major instruments of capital, that which prevents one facing "with sober senses his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind."<sup>55</sup> The third self-referential joke: Tyler inserts penises into children's films; but Tyler is Jack's alien penis, also inserted into the film.

Lest we get bigheaded about our intelligence in deciphering the movie's methods, the fact that Tyler is Jack's implicit truth is also why Tyler insults Jack's cleverness *upon first meeting him* in the airplane, after hearing Jack's single-serving-friend joke. "Oh, I get it. It's very clever. How's that working out for you?" "What?" "Being clever." "Er, great." "Well. Keep it up then. Right-o. And now, as I pass, a question of etiquette; do I give you the ass or the crotch" as I squeeze between you and the seat in front of us? Tyler gives the smartass the ass. As he makes his way into the first-class section to grab a better seat, he gives a bentover stewardess the crotch.

The convoluted selfrelations portrayed in and performed by the film are basically empty without the quite *simple* insight into self-alienation. Jack is Tyler. Jack's *real name* is Tyler Durden. Tyler, answering the phone: "Who's this?" Jack: "Er... Tyler?" Doublemindfulness, as in *Eyeballing* and *Angel Heart*, is expressed as unconsciousness.

[The subject] does in fact contain... this truth of pure negativity and being-for-self, for it has experienced this its own essential nature. For this consciousness has been fearful, not of this or that particular thing or just at odd moments, but its whole being has been seized with dread; for it has experienced the fear of death, the absolute Lord. In that experience it has been quite unmanned, has trembled in every fibre of its being, and everything solid and stable has been shaken to its foundations. But this pure universal moment, the absolute melting-away of everything stable, is the simple, essential nature of self-consciousness, absolute negativity, *pure being-for-self*, which consequently is *implicit* in this consciousness....<sup>56</sup>

Despite his inchoate desires, Jack's fear and loathing of his living death unman and emasculate him.

Furthermore, his consciousness is not this dissolution of everything stable merely in principle; in his service he *actually* brings this about. Through his service he rids himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail; and gets rid of it by working on it.... [A]lthough the fear of the lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom, consciousness is not therein aware that it is a being-for-self. Through work, however, the bondsman becomes conscious of what he truly is.<sup>57</sup>

In Jack's case, there is a twist to the classical master-slave dialectic: his labor—which is supposed to allow the slave to free himself from the master by allowing the slave to see that he is the creator of all objects of enjoyment, that he is the master's essence—is *nonproductive*; in fact, actually harmful. He participates in the insurance fraud, a mere transfer of wealth to lawyers and his major auto manufacturer. He is not only alienated from his "product," i.e., destruction of the conditions of social reproduction, but he doesn't even get the pleasure of seeing this negation as his product, like black slaves could see the bales of cotton on the wagon or, if they could read, their or their exchange value in the commercial papers. He emphatically does *not* "[t]hrough his *service*...rid himself of his attachment to natural existence in every single detail...by working on it,"<sup>58</sup> although he does, unconsciously, bring about the dissolution of everything stable, both

in his job and through Tyler. What insignificant paperpushing clerk, without special training or a stroke of luck, can *know*, or believe even if told that his or her work is *destructive*? Usually we know only that we do nothing of any positive significance. His nonproductive, destructive labor prevents him from recognizing his creativity. This nonproductivity determines the specific course of development of our fictional slave's consciousness, although we can still say

just as lordship show[s] that its essential nature is the reverse of what it wants to be, so too servitude in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness.<sup>59</sup>

*How, if the slave can no longer identify his negation in the fruits of his labor? If all this is invisible or imperceptible? What can pressure this withdrawal into a sense of self at all?*

The social organization that can "afford" to keep so many slaves nonproductive has been tightly organized and regimented *throughout*: in the social factory *the pressure simply never lets up*. Our slave can either go home, go shopping, or perhaps to a movie, but, as an individual, he cannot escape the community of capital. That Jack has nothing at hand with which to determine his refusal of this world, his "prefer[ence] not to,"<sup>60</sup> is why he eventually cracks under the pressure, his dogged strength insufficient to keep him from being torn asunder. Tyler is Jack's extreme self-withdrawal; the nature of Jack's work determines this development both in its destructiveness and in its unconsciousness.

The single consciousness has broken in two under the pressure of life as a nonproductive slave—the actually contradictory conditions of Jack's existence have been taken up into his mind. Jack has been driven stark raving mad, and we have leapt totally beyond the realm of selfhelp projects and deathhelp support groups. Jack's independent object, that object upon which he works, is now to be *himself* as an other. And because Tyler is Jack's alien essence, it looks like Tyler works on Jack: Tyler is lord, whose action is essential; Jack is bondsman, whose action is impure, and Tyler does indeed ride Jack like a

slave. However, "[W]hat the bondsman does is really the action of the lord...."

Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self.<sup>61</sup>

The first independent consciousness opposing Jack was unconscious exchange value, blocking his becoming self-for-self, unmanning him; in the first pass, Tyler immediately appeared to be the second, the personification of his self-for-self and the supersession of the first independent consciousness. *But Marla was the first independent consciousness to appear before Jack*. His desire for her and his impotence in the face of it was the catalyst for his disintegration.

A blocked practice and its corollary, an antidialectical false consciousness, are imposed at every moment on an everyday life in thrall to the spectacle—an everyday life that should be understood as the systematic organization of a breakdown in the faculty of encounter, and the replacement of that faculty by a social hallucination: a false consciousness of encounter, or an "illusion of encounter."<sup>62</sup>

Broken, Jack mediates himself as object (Jack) to himself as essence-as-an-other-being (Tyler) via his desire for Marla, the *original* other being.

They are, *for each other*, shapes of consciousness which have not yet accomplished the movement of absolute abstraction, of rooting-out all immediate being, and of being merely the purely negative being of self-identical consciousness; in other words, they have not as yet exposed themselves to each other in the form of pure being-for-self, or as self-consciousnesses. Each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth.<sup>63</sup>

Neither Jack nor Marla could treat one another as beings-for-self, because they were not, although both were rather quickly electric-sliding toward absolute bottom. We don't know how Marla feels, but Jack

knows that "All of this—the gun, the bombs, the revolution—has got something to do with a girl named Marla Singer."

### ***Die Peckerwood!, or, Brer Rabbit Gets Mean***

#### **SLIDE DOWN THE SLIPPERY SOAP**

That *Our Nig* had nothing with which to determine his refusal of this world is also why the negation Tyler brings is general and omnidirectional—indeterminate destruction, freefloating nihilism, at least in principle.<sup>64</sup> Tyler is Jack's black rage—the bomb standing on the corner of the city<sup>65</sup>—which means more than rage: passion, flamboyance, desire, sexuality. Jack relates to Marla via Tyler. Tyler actually procures Marla for Jack. Tyler is Jack's inner pimp.<sup>66</sup> But this is not OK.

It must supersede this otherness of itself. This is the supersession of the first ambiguity, and is therefore itself a second ambiguity. First, it must proceed to supersede the other independent being in order thereby to become certain of itself as the essential being; secondly, in so doing it proceeds to supersede its own self, for this other is itself.<sup>67</sup>

The ambiguous supersession/exclusion of the first otherness, Marla, was thus the second ambiguous disintegration of personality, Jack's confrontation with himself as an other. "Away back in the days of bondage," Jack "thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment,"<sup>68</sup> but his air crash deathwish has been replaced by a new task: within the all-male Fight Club, Jack must supersede Tyler.

The presentation of itself, however, as the pure abstraction of self-consciousness consists in showing itself as the pure negation of its objective mode, or in showing that it is not attached to any specific *existence*, not to the individuality common to existence as such, that it is not attached to life.... In so far as it is the action of the *other*, each seeks the death of the other.... [This] involves the staking of its own life.... They must engage in this struggle, for they must raise their certainty of being *for themselves* to truth.... Similarly, just as each stakes his own life, so each must seek the other's death...its essential being is present to it in the form of an

“other,” it is outside of itself and must rid itself of its self-externality.<sup>69</sup>

But Tyler also seeks to supersede Jack, bringing the force of the entire group to bear on him, “[k]aze in dem days Brer Rabbit en his fambly wuz at de head er de gang w’en enny racket wuz on han’ ....”<sup>70</sup>

The duration of the movie comprises the ambiguous negations by which Jack and Tyler *together* kill both whitey, i.e., Jack, and his inner nigger, i.e., Tyler. Some shallowminded critics call this series of negations simply fascistic<sup>71</sup>—somebody who never heard of ecofascism,<sup>72</sup> the Green wing of the National Socialist Party, or the *Wandervögel* might miss Tyler’s reference to the Boy Scouts.<sup>73</sup> Somebody who never heard of Ernst Haeckel,<sup>74</sup> the Strasser brothers, or National Bolshevism<sup>75</sup> might not grasp the significance of Tyler’s antihuman, Malthusian anarchoprimitivism (of the sort associated with the Detroit journal *Fifth Estate*). Somebody who never heard of Romantic irRationalism might not understand why Tyler has rejected “the ideal of ‘book learning’...the power of the cabalistic letters of the white man.”<sup>76</sup> Regarding Jack’s knowledge of what a duvet is, Tyler responds, “Is this essential to our survival? In the hunter-gatherer sense of the word?” He wants to go back to the *Boden*, and soon he’ll shed some *Blut*. Somebody might respond, as I first did, positively-though-naïvely, to the anticapitalist aspect of *Fight Club*, while remaining totally ignorant of the basis of the stupid critics’ judgment. But one thing nobody will miss is the human-flesh soap, the sharp point on the fascist tip. This a direct reference to National Socialism, but it’s just as ambiguous as Tyler’s existence. The movie assigns soap a special role, as the yardstick of civilization, but “it was beautiful. We were selling rich women their own fat asses back to them” by taking *discarded* human flesh from a liposuction-clinic dumpster. They are rejecting both civilization and soap, “the yardstick of [bourgeois] civilization,” spitting on both. The genuine protofascism is Tyler’s respect for the *foundation* of civilization, *die Ursprung*, the glorious moment when the self-sacrificial hero dies in battle, the lamb is offered up in sacrifice, the potash mixes with melted fat, and the river thus runs foamy. This grounds the space-monkey imagery—those Fight Clubbers “ready to be shot into space...ready to sacrifice [themselves] for the greater good”—and *this* is what is potentially fascist about the



brand of anarchoprimitivist ecology with which they cover their general nihilism. This awe of the origin, Adorno's "ontological need,"<sup>77</sup> also grounds the only ritual the Fight Clubbers participate in: the commemoration in a chant of the first martyr to Fight Club, Robert Paulson. "This is a man, and he has a name—and it's Robert Paulson." A new liturgy; the sort of vulgar ritualism refined in Catholicism, corollary of Tyler's vulgar pseudoPromethean atheism, or, rather, antitheism.

Yes, Tyler is antihuman, despite his *idiosyncratically, voluntarily correct* objects of attack.

Listen up, maggots. You are not special. You are not beautiful and unique snowflakes. You are the same decaying organic matter as everything else. We are the all-singing all-dancing crap of the world. We are all part of the same compost heap.

No burning leaves of any sort here. Smoking isn't even allowed inside the Paper Street Soap Company. It's possible that Tyler is just deprogramming the space monkeys, but the problem remains, as it does in the case of Raymond K. Hessel, Tyler's contemporary human sacrifice, the convenience-store clerk, *Scared Straight*—straight back into the bourgeois education system. One can give Tyler the benefit of the doubt again, as in the pornosplines: he wanted to draw some line in Hessel's mind; the line between his desires and his reality, to tell Hessel that he should take his desires for reality, accept the reality of his desires, whatever they were, however corrupt. But then again, Hessel wanted to be a veterinarian, so that may have jibed somehow with Tyler's otherwise antihuman ecological streak. Hitler loved animals, too.

### Fascist

Violence (individual or groupuscule terrorism)

Ecology (anticivilization ideology)

### Revolutionary

Violence (mass working-class violence)

Ecology (global reconstruction and technology deployment)

Anticonsumerism (dropout ideology)

Anticonsumerism (super-session of  $x\Delta$  value by use value)

Antispectacle (attack on some of its tools)

Antispectacle (attainment of real life)

These negations, though potentially fascistic when truncated, are necessary components of any revolutionary activity. The ambiguity intelligent critics have detected is the result of the fact that Jack and Tyler's negations are *indeterminate* and generally nihilistic, because of the nature of Jack's labor, i.e., his work situation. This is a case of the medium helping to convey the message: the ambiguity is a direct result of the absence of a positive vision for humanity, which is impossible to convey in a film, even one of 139 minutes. The film pastes on its politics, and that only in the choice of objects of attack. We see Jack and Tyler *choosing*, for no necessary reason, certain objects of negation: office buildings, franchises, 1999 VW bugs, cops, credit-card companies; this *merely happens to be* the whole "anticorporate" line, even though they ramp it up. They're the Zerzanite black bloc on crystal meth. (Steroids get your balls cut off.) None of that bullshit *Adbusters* muckraking: they come right out and tell these fools YOU CAN USE MOTOR OIL TO FERTILIZE YOUR LAWN.

But a developed *posit-ion* grounding the negations is also sorely lacking in the shallow minds that badmouthed the movie. It is why the author of the novel sold out at the end and why the movie can't depict the transcendence of vulgar negation of negation, even in the Fight Club itself: there is not quite competition in Fight Club; that, in the actual fighting, is secondary. They are united by negation: their work on destructive projects, by degradation in their training, and by ritual repetition of the fact that they are the all-singing, all-dancing crap of the world. It takes years to develop revolutionary consciousness, and one can't expect a movie substantively to portray it. This movie did the best that any movie addressing such matters can do, by not *condemning* the Fight Clubbers to vulgar negation in principle, with some necessary and necessarily exclusive ideology. Besides, vulgar negation makes for one helluvan action film. "Self-improvement is masturbation. Now, self-destruction..."

TU'N ME LOOSE, FO' I KICK DE NATAL STUFFIN' OUTEN YOU...<sup>78</sup>

This being a movie, the ends justify the means: killing Jack's inner honky, by any means necessary, is more important than the ambiguous negations it entails. Among those directly concerning Jack, by moving into the Paper Street house "in the toxic-waste part of town," Jack submits himself to environmental hazards usually disproportionately reserved for blacks and others bred en bawn in the brier-patch.<sup>79</sup> This is a major relinquishment of privilege. Jack gets unemployed, and by putting his mind to it, gets to keep his salary. He also graciously takes a beatdown from a black man.

Those concerning both Tyler and Jack are more charged. The subtext of all Fight Club activity is Jack's battle with Tyler; Tyler is stronger, more charismatic, and, in occupying the same space as Jack, *annihilates* Jack a little more every day for over a year, taking his consciousness away.

This trial by death, however, does away with the truth which was supposed to issue from it, and so, too, with the certainty of self generally. For just as life is the *natural* setting of consciousness, independence without absolute negativity, so death is the *natural* negation of consciousness, negation without independence, which thus remains without the required significance of recognition. Death certainly shows that each staked his life and held it of no account, both in himself and in the other; but that is not for those who survived this struggle. They put an end to their consciousness in its alien setting of natural existence, that is to say, they put an end to themselves, and are done away with as *extremes* wanting to be *for themselves*, or to have an existence of their own.<sup>80</sup>

We are dealing with self-alienation, not a battle between two different people, but within one person; this struggle takes place *in*, or at least *over*, *consciousness*; in the mind in any case: it is *not* "an abstract negation," but "the negation coming from consciousness, which supersedes in such a way as to preserve and maintain what is superseded, and consequently survives its own supersession."<sup>81</sup> The Fight Clubbers in general, all over the country, grow more independent as well.

After Tyler puts him to bed with a *Mad Max* future-primitive bedtime story, Jack awakens, after who knows how long, to the truth both of exchange value and of his own essence as Tyler, captain of

this ship of destruction: the crew's tertiary position in relation to the means of production, which blinkers their vision of a better world, and their destructiveness, also a derivative of their nonproductivity, makes of the Paper Street Soap Company—an "employee-owned," anarcho-syndicalist, and *therefore-still-capitalist enterprise*—the only adequate form: the fundamental contradiction of their lives as capitalist nonproducers has been taken up into their revolutionary activity as well, while simultaneously revealing that social labor is the breath of spirit, giving life: "The house had become a living thing. Wet inside from so many people sweating and breathing. So many people moving the house moved. *Planet Tyler*. I had to hug the walls, trapped inside this clockwork of space monkeys, cooking and working and sleeping in teams." Tyler has organized the postindustrial Anacharsis Clootz deputation.<sup>82</sup>

Bob's death sends Jack chasing his alienated self all over the country, from airport to grimy bar to street corner—"like chasing an *Invisible Man*," yet another dropout man-of-negation—, and only because the Fight Clubbers everywhere—bondsmen of dependent consciousness in the process of selfliberation—still retain an inordinate respect for him, their leader, do they even give him a clue. "I'm looking for Tyler Durden. It's very important that I talk to him." Fight Clubber X shrugs and says, "I wish I could help you. *Sir*." X winks. "Tyler had been busy, setting up franchises." Confused, Jack asks another Fight Clubber "Who do you think I am?" He calls Marla from an anonymous hotel room, and she answers him: "Tyler Durden! Tyler Durden, you fucking freak!" Tyler annihilates Jack again, just long enough to put the finishing touches on the new operation to bomb the credit-card companies. "It's called a changeover. And no one in the audience has any idea." As Jack rushes out of the hotel the next morning, heading back to Any City, USA, he wonders, "Have I been going to bed earlier every night? Have I been sleeping later? Have I been Tyler longer and longer?"

Jack's new awareness of what was formerly unconscious is also awareness of the danger Marla poses to Tyler: he finally sees her exclusion for what it is: his disintegration. He knows that Tyler exists only in the space between him and Marla. In the hotel room, Tyler says "Now you see *our* dilemma. She knows too much. I think *we're* going to have to talk about how this might compromise *our* goals."

But there is no “we” or “our” about it. Marla is a threat to Tyler’s independent existence as master, HNIC, superpimp. Tyler’s essence is Jack’s thwarted desire; Tyler is Jack’s schizophrenically mediated relation to himself as immediate—not as broken, split—other, i.e., Marla.

But Jack supersedes his alienation: he outwits Tyler. “I can figure this out... I can figure this out. This isn’t even real. You’re not real. That gun isn’t...that gun isn’t even in your hand! That gun’s in my hand!” Here Tyler and Jack also switch *places*, not only guns-in-hand. “I don’t want this!” “Right. Except ‘you’ is meaningless now.” Besides that, “What *do* you want? You wanna go back to the shit job, fucking condo world? Watchin’ sitcoms? Fuck that! I won’t do it.” “You’re a voice in my head!” Nat Turner used to have visions, too. “You’re a voice in mine!... You need me.... You created *me*! I didn’t create some loser alterego to make myself feel better.... Have I ever let us down? How far have you come because of me? I will bring us through this, as always: I will carry you kicking and screaming, and in the end you will thank me.” Who’s the servile consciousness? Who rides on whose back now?<sup>83</sup> Out of a desire to prove to this otherness of himself that he “is not attached to any specific *existence*, not to the individuality common to existence as such,” that he “is not attached to life,” that he has “staked his life and held it of no account,” Jack commits suicide—*Die Whitey*! He misses, though, and only blows out his left cheek, ear, and throat. But with this shot to the head, Jack kills Tyler—*Die, Nigga*!<sup>84</sup>

Jack has worked himself over throughout the movie, and can now call himself by his own name.

[I]n fashioning the thing, the bondsman’s own negativity, his being-for-self, becomes an object for him only through his setting at nought the existing *shape* confronting him. But this objective *negative* moment is none other than the alien being before which it has trembled. Now, however, he destroys this alien negative moment, posits *himself* as a negative in the permanent order of things, and thereby becomes *for himself*, someone existing on his own account.... Without the formative [i.e., destructive] activity, fear remains inward and mute, and consciousness does not become explicitly *for itself*.<sup>85</sup>

True to big-pimpin' form, Tyler's final act was one of procurement. He brought Marla to her, next to Jack's, "front-row seat to this theater of mass destruction," the erasure of the debt record.

## Paint a SelfPortrait; Build a House

A picture'll last longer. You can put it in a single-story dwelling with high square footage, the better to meet big-tent purposes. Though their labor was devoted to the destruction of this world, the Fight Clubbers had a firm hold of one precondition of a better world: self-directed social labor among the discarded middle children of history, embodied here in that generation of coffee jerks and nameless clerks, who, because of their nonproductivity, have not quite yet got a hold of the need for more than destruction.

This ambiguous supersession of its ambiguous otherness is equally an ambiguous return *into itself*. For first, through the supersession, it receives back its own self, because, by superseding *its* otherness, it again becomes equal to itself; but secondly, the other self-consciousness equally gives it back again to itself, for it saw itself in the other, but supersedes this being of itself in the other and thus lets the other again go free.<sup>86</sup>

Jack is now free to be Tyler, to be himself. But who is Tyler? The second supersession, Tyler's reintegration of his personality, merely delivers him back onto the ambiguous ground of the first supersession, of dealing with his relationship with Marla. In the diner, the words which begin to heal their wounded relationship are "I really *like* you Marla." Love, apparently, remains unreal, but at least they can try.

Neither Ian's, Angel's, Michael's, nor Jack's *doublemindedness* was Du Bois's dual consciousness, but Jack reaches this state at the end of *Fight Club*: he "merge[s] his double self into a better and truer self,"<sup>87</sup> *himself*, Tyler Durden. The mass of black former slaves reached this plateau long ago, around the end of Reconstruction, after their hopes of *positive* freedom were crushed. It remains in their spiritual forms, and they have been maintaining ever since, but was maintenance work the object of their spiritual strivings?

Jack got some of what blacks got: the ability "to let that which does not matter truly slide," which is preserved for them *also* medi-

ately, only in the cultural results of the supersession of *one* master-slave relation, which, however, “white” slaves have heretofore never experienced.

It’s a good thing not only philosophers are dialecticians. I know the sublated magic of jazz, and how Miles ran the voodoo down, too<sup>88</sup>; I have seen Richard Pryor transubstantiate leaden pain and burden into goldenbellied laughter; I have heard the sad clowns of Mingus and Shepard filled with a spirit of whimsy in the music of Monk and Dolphy—all slaves about to be masters, but the schedule’s not a firm one. “[T]he freedman has not yet found in freedom his promised land.”<sup>89</sup>

We perish for lack of that positive vision, but *Fight Club*—though the destruction portrayed remains vulgar and indeterminate, at best extreme anticapitalism—takes us to the point where we have no choice but to formulate one. Palahniuk may be right when he says that “the first way a new generation takes control of society is through culture,”<sup>90</sup> but “only the real negation of culture can inherit culture’s meaning. Such negation can no longer remain *cultural*.”<sup>91</sup>

Then again, perhaps *Fight Club* is just a case of the spectacle of decay accompanying the decay of the spectacle.

---

#### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> African, Indian, and white.

<sup>2</sup> Loren Goldner, *AfroAnabaptistIndian Fusion: The Fusion of Anabaptist, Indian, and African as the American Radical Tradition: A Comment on Paul Buhle’s “US Radicalism: Past and Future”* (1987) (*Break Their Haughty Power*, <http://home.earthlink.net/~lrgoldner/afroanab.html>).

<sup>3</sup> Robert Hemenway, “Introduction,” in Joel Chandler Harris, *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (1880) (Penguin, 1982).

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Ventura, “Hear That Long Snake Moan,” in *Shadow Dancing in the USA* (Jeremy B. Tarcher, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> “Not bad meaning bad but bad meaning good!” Run-D.M.C., “Peter Piper,” on *Raising Hell* (1986).

<sup>6</sup> Driving while intoxicated.

<sup>7</sup> *The Low End Theory*.

<sup>8</sup> *This Is Madness*. The Last Poets were created on May 19, 1968, at a birthday celebration for Malcolm X; they were a group of three poets and a drummer.

<sup>9</sup> “The spectacle is *capital* accumulated to the point where it becomes image.” Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967) (Zone, 1995), ¶ 34, p. 24.

<sup>10</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807) (Oxford, 1977, A.V. Miller, trans.), § 186, p. 113.

<sup>11</sup> See Jacques Camatte’s writings up to 1974, some of which are available on [www.geocities.com/~johngray/](http://www.geocities.com/~johngray/).

<sup>12</sup> Debord, ¶ 217, p. 152.

<sup>13</sup> David Nelson, "Die Nigga!!!" 1969, on *The Original Last Poets, Right On!* (1971).

<sup>14</sup> Debord, ¶ 153, p. 112.

<sup>15</sup> Id.

<sup>16</sup> Carter seems upon first viewing to have been slighted in this role, to have been excluded just like her character. While her character gets less time onscreen than Tyler and Jack, Carter has made every second, every word, every facial tic count *twice*. If Norton delivers impotence and Pitt plays a big swinging dick, she's a doubledose of Viagra.

<sup>17</sup> Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* (1844) (Prometheus, 1988), pp. 101–102.

<sup>18</sup> Hegel, § 186, p. 113.

<sup>19</sup> Id., § 178, p. 111.

<sup>20</sup> Umar Bin Hassan, "Niggers Are Scared of Revolution," *The Last Poets, The Last Poets* (1970).

<sup>21</sup> Id.

<sup>22</sup> Eve Rosenhaft, "Organising the 'Lumpenproletariat': Cliques and Communists in Berlin During the Weimar Republic," in Richard J. Evans, ed., *The German Working Class, 1888–1933: The Politics of Everyday Life* (1982) (*Collective Action Notes*, [www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379/evans1.htm](http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379/evans1.htm)):

[T]he all-male groups were ordinarily accompanied on their adventures by one or two "clique-darlings," whose responsibilities reportedly included looking after the "sexual needs" of the boys. One 16-year-old outlined the activities of his group in these words:

We go through the streets and look for girls to take along on our hikes. I am in the hiking clique Stormproof... At Easter I go with four other clique-boys to Kloster Chorin [a tourist spot about 35 miles from Berlin]. I want to quit the clique, because they whore around too much with girls.

The programmatic rejection of female company was expressed in such clique names as GirlShy and GirlHaters.

<sup>23</sup> Slavoj Žižek, "Multiculturalism, or, the Cultural Logic of Multinational Capitalism," *New Left Review* 225 (September/October 1997). He deduced that women must be excluded in order to *create* homophobia, and that this is constitutive of the murderous rage soldiers must feel in order to kill.

<sup>24</sup> Hassan, *supra* note 18.

<sup>25</sup> Tyler is Jack. So Jack is "jealous" of the attention Jack himself is paying to AngelFace. Jack is unhappy that he is paying so much attention to AngelFace, i.e., Jack is unhappy that he is attracted to Angel Face. Jack is homophobic. But then again, the dickless, emasculated Jack, the "woman," is upset that the outrageous walking hard-on Tyler is not more attracted to him. "I am Jack's inflamed sense of rejection." Jack has penis envy. But because Tyler is Jack, this just means that Jack has no sense of his own sexuality. He has no sexual identity. He is asexual.

<sup>26</sup> Ishmael Reed, *Reckless Eyeballing* (1986) (Atheneum, 1998), p. 146.

<sup>27</sup> Id., pp. 145–146.

<sup>28</sup> "The membership of the various clubs was determined by occupation and social class and at that time, even more sharply than now, that discrimination would be virtually the same as differentiation according to color. Queens Park Club, the controllers of cricket in [Trinidad], were white and wealthy; Shamrock, Catholic French Creole traders and cocoa planters; Maple, middle class of brown skin; Shannon, the Black middle class version, white collar office types, and teachers; and then Shango, the tradesman, artisan, worker."



Richard Small, "The Training of an Intellectual, the Making of a Marxist," in *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work* (Sojourner Truth Organization, Summer 1981), p. 13–14.

<sup>29</sup> "Although from solid 'Shannon' stock, his brightness [intellect but also necessarily skin] had got him to one of the two leading secondary schools. It was a path that was expected to release a few Black men in a generation into the rare surroundings of professional life and legislative appointment." Id., p. 15. "James was advised to go to Maple because they were 'people who you are going to meet in life. Join them...'" Id.

<sup>30</sup> "John O. Killens, novelist; Lorraine Hansberry, playwright; James Baldwin, novelist-essayist; Ossie Davis, actor-playwright; Ruby Dee, actress; LeRoi Jones, playwright-poet; Paule Marshall, novelist; Louis Lomax, journalist." Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual: A Historical Analysis of the Failure of Black Leadership* (1967) (Quill, 1984), pp. 193–205.

<sup>31</sup> Reed, p. 127.

<sup>32</sup> Ebonics-phonics makes a pun in past perfect.

<sup>33</sup> Id., pp. 51–52.

<sup>34</sup> "'As long as such books are being published,' an American liberal once said to me, 'everything will be all right.'" James Baldwin, "Everybody's Protest Novel," in *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) (Beacon, 1962), p. 19. Of course Cruse was correct that Baldwin never did much more than that himself.

<sup>35</sup> Reed, p. 83.

<sup>36</sup> *Dos Cabezas* is a 1982 Basquiat painting, a selfportrait Siamese of Basquiat and Warhol joined at the head.

<sup>37</sup> Phoebe Hoban, *Basquiat: A Quick Killing in Art* (1998), p. 1–5.

<sup>38</sup> Reed, p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Id., p. 34.

<sup>40</sup> Id., p. 92.

<sup>41</sup> Guru, "Mass Appeal," Gangstarr, *Hard to Earn* (1994).

<sup>42</sup> Perhaps *Five Easy Pieces* came close, but it didn't convey the *movement*: it was more a recapitulation of the static existential myth: the noble and beautiful soul hardened by a heartless world.

<sup>43</sup> The other was *Heat* (1995), 21 years later, a cops-and-robbers drama in which De Niro's criminal, this time, unfortunately, doesn't make it.

<sup>44</sup> Du Bois, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Hegel, § 189, p. 115.

<sup>46</sup> Id.

<sup>47</sup> Id., § 190, p. 115.

<sup>48</sup> My high school debate coach, a "60s person," once summarized her perspective on the moshpit pastimes of several of her young charges by claiming that it was a sad sign of the times that young people had to beat each other up while tripping on acid, formerly reserved for more peaceful contexts, in order to have some feelings of their own.

<sup>49</sup> Hegel, § 190, pp. 115–116.

<sup>50</sup> Id., § 191, p. 116.

<sup>51</sup> Id.

<sup>52</sup> Id., § 192, pp. 116–117.

<sup>53</sup> Id., § 193, p. 117.

<sup>54</sup> Id., § 194, p. 117.

<sup>55</sup> Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848) (International Publishers, 1948), p. 12.

<sup>56</sup> Hegel, § 194, p. 117.

<sup>57</sup> Id., § 194–195, pp. 117–118.

<sup>58</sup> Id., § 194, p. 117 (*italics mine*).

<sup>59</sup> Id., § 193, p. 117.

<sup>60</sup> See Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the Scrivener" (1853), another palefaced clerk driven to distraction. Bartleby and Jack experience the same blocked power of negation, but Bartleby ends in a more passive self-destruction.

<sup>61</sup> Id., § 179, p. 111.

<sup>62</sup> Debord, ¶ 217, p. 152.

<sup>63</sup> Hegel, § 186, p. 113.

<sup>64</sup> The movie fudges this point a bit. I discuss this in the text below. It is an inevitable problem of the medium; in *Fight Club*, this ambiguity makes the movie more successful.

<sup>65</sup> See Abiodun Oyewole, "Black Rage," on *The Last Poets*, *Holy Terror* (1994), reprinted in Oyewole, Umar Bin Hassan, with Kim Green, *On a Mission: Selected Poems and a History of The Last Poets* (1996). Oyewole and Bin Hassan are two original Last Poets.

<sup>66</sup> Like a prostitute who alienates her sexual *activity*, while her *sexuality* becomes the exclusive terrain of the pimp, the sole mediation between her sexuality and her alienated sexual activity; the pimp maintains this relationship by occasionally having sex with her, to reassure her that she does indeed still have access to her sexuality, that her alienated sexual activity has not also alienated her sexuality. Of course, in doing this, she also reassures the pimp that he has control over her sexuality, and another cycle begins. This is the connection between the nonproductive "service economy" and the spectacle, both why spectacle must accompany nonproductive labor, and the material basis of its effectiveness. The spectacle is the product of such nonproductive labor, but it is also a substitute for our relation to our nonexistent object of desire, the object upon which we *would* but *do not* labor out of love. The pimp plays that role for the prostitute; Tyler plays that role for Jack.

<sup>67</sup> Hegel, § 180, p. 111.

<sup>68</sup> Du Bois, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Hegel, § 187, pp. 113–114.

<sup>70</sup> "How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox," Harris, p. 62. This is the famous briar-patch story.

<sup>71</sup> Roger Ebert of the *Chicago Sun-Times*: "*Fight Club* is the most frankly and cheerfully fascist big-star movie since *Death Wish*, a celebration of violence in which the heroes write themselves a license to drink, smoke, screw and beat one another up.... None of the *Fight Club* members grows stronger or freer because of their membership; they're reduced to pathetic cultists. Issue them black shirts and sign them up as skinheads" ([www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert\\_reviews/1999/10/101502.html](http://www.suntimes.com/ebert/ebert_reviews/1999/10/101502.html)). David Edelstein of *Slate*: "Tyler's...idea of confining his group's mayhem to franchise coffee bars and corporate-subsidized art is a witty one—it's like a parody of neo-Nazism as re-enacted by yuppies" ([slate.msn.com/MovieReview/99-10-15/MovieReview.asp](http://slate.msn.com/MovieReview/99-10-15/MovieReview.asp)). Kenneth Turan of the *Los Angeles Times*, October 15, 1999: While both Tyler...and Jack...are capable of extended neomacho riffs on the virtues of *Fight Club*, that doesn't prevent the whole concept from playing like the delusional rantings of testosterone-addicted thugs.... a philosophy the Columbine gunmen would likely have found congenial" (accessible through [www.calendarlive.com](http://www.calendarlive.com)). Alexander Walker of the *London Evening Standard*: "It is an inadmissible assault on personal decency. And on society itself.... It echoes propaganda that gave license to the brutal activities of the SA and the SS. It resurrects the Führer principle" (*Fight Club* DVD liner notes). You can browse through dozens of these reviews on [www.davidfincher.net/fightclub/reviews.htm](http://www.davidfincher.net/fightclub/reviews.htm).

<sup>72</sup> "[A] peculiar synthesis of naturalism and nationalism forged under the influence of the Romantic tradition's antiEnlightenment irrationalism." Peter Staudenmaier, "The 'Green Wing' of the Nazi Party and Its Historical Antecedents," in Janet Biehl and Peter Staudenmaier, *Ecofascism: Lessons From the German Experience* (1995) ([www.spunk.org/library/places/germany/sp001630/ecofasc.html](http://www.spunk.org/library/places/germany/sp001630/ecofasc.html)).

<sup>73</sup> "Wanderbirds." Rosenhaft:

Perhaps the most remarkable example in modern history of a coherent movement both initiated and led by young people, the *Wandervögel* was essentially middle-class in character and composition. It originated among students and progressive teachers at a Berlin secondary school between 1896 and 1900, and by 1913 had become a national movement with a bureaucracy of its own and an extensive literary output.... *Wandervögel* became a watchword for the whole of the German youth movement, and provided an impulse for the creation, before the First World War, of groups like the government-sponsored and militaristic Young Germany League and the German section of the Boy Scout movement.

Some of the later *Klicken* "refer[red] directly to the romance of the *Wandervögel* movement, which the cliques imitated and caricatured." Staudenmaier:

The chief vehicle for carrying [ecofascism] to prominence was the youth movement, an amorphous phenomenon which played a decisive but highly ambivalent role in shaping German popular culture during the first three tumultuous decades of this century. Also known as the *Wandervögel* (which translates roughly as "wandering free spirits"), the youth movement was a hodgepodge of countercultural elements, blending neoRomanticism, Eastern philosophies, nature mysticism, hostility to reason, and a strong communal impulse in a confused but no less ardent search for authentic, nonalienated social relations. Their back-to-the-land emphasis spurred a passionate sensitivity to the natural world and the damage it suffered. They have been aptly characterized as "rightwing hippies," for although some sectors of the movement gravitated toward various forms of emancipatory politics (though usually shedding their environmentalist trappings in the process), most of the *Wandervögel* were eventually absorbed by the Nazis. This shift from nature worship to Führer worship is worth examining.

<sup>74</sup> Staudenmaier:

In 1867 the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel coined the term "ecology" and began to establish it as a scientific discipline dedicated to studying the interactions between organism and environment. Haeckel was also the chief popularizer of Darwin and evolutionary theory for the German-speaking world, and developed a peculiar sort of social Darwinist philosophy he called "monism." The German Monist League he founded combined scientifically based ecological holism with *völkisch* social views. Haeckel believed in Nordic racial superiority, strenuously opposed race mixing and enthusiastically supported racial eugenics. "Haeckel contributed to that special variety of German thought which served as the seed bed for National Socialism. He became one of Germany's major ideologists for racism, nationalism and imperialism." [footnote deleted].... The pioneer of scientific ecology, along with his disciples Willibald Hentschel, Wilhelm Bölsche and Bruno Wille, profoundly shaped the thinking of subsequent generations of environmentalists by embedding concern for the natural world in a tightly woven web of regressive social themes. From its very beginnings, then, ecology was bound up in an intensely reactionary political framework.

<sup>75</sup> "[T]he Strasser brothers, two 1920s Nazi Party members who took the 'Socialism' in 'National Socialism' seriously and represented the 'left' anticapitalist wing of the Nazis.

Today, the *Solidaristen* and other [National Bolsheviks] regard Otto Strasser in particular as the 'Trotsky of National Socialism' because of his 1920s intraparty power struggle with Hitler; Hitler's ejection of this fascist in 1930 was, for them, a betrayal of National Socialism." Janet Biehl, "'Ecology' and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultraright," in Biehl and Staudenmaier.

<sup>76</sup> Du Bois, pp. 5–6.

<sup>77</sup> "A fact supporting the...resuscitation of ontology [is] the fact that to a great extent the subject came to be an ideology, a screen for society's objective functional context and a palliative for the subjects' suffering under society." You are not going to be a rock star or a movie god. You are not a beautiful and unique snowflake, and perhaps God hates you. "Ontology and the philosophy of Being are modes of reaction in which—along with other and cruder modes—consciousness hopes to escape from that entanglement. But...the truth that expels man from the center of creation and reminds him of his impotence—this same truth will, as a subjective mode of conduct, confirm the sense of impotence, cause men to identify with it...." Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966) (Continuum, 1997) pp. 66–68. The resulting antihumanism in Tyler's rants is merely more vulgar selfidentification with the negation of the negation, vice claimed as virtue.

<sup>78</sup> Brer Rabbit's words to her in "The Wonderful Tar-Baby Story," Harris, p. 59.

<sup>79</sup> "Bred en bawn in a brier-patch, Brer Fox—bred en bawn in a brier-patch!" "How Mr. Rabbit Was Too Sharp for Mr. Fox," Harris, p. 64.

<sup>80</sup> Hegel, § 188, p. 114.

<sup>81</sup> Id., pp. 114–115.

<sup>82</sup> "They were nearly all Islanders in the Pequod, *Isolatoos* too, I call such, not acknowledging the common continent of men, but each *Isolato* living on a separate continent of his own. Yet now, federated along one keel, what a set these *Isolatoos* were! An Anacharsis Clootz deputation from all the isles of the sea, and all the ends of the earth, accompanying Old Ahab in the Pequod to lay the world's grievances before that bar from which not very many of them ever come back." Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick* (1851) (Penguin, 1992), pp. 131–32. The same edition notes that "in 1790 the German nobleman Jean Baptiste Clootz appeared with a gathered deputation of foreigners before the French National Assembly to demonstrate the universal endorsement of the French Revolution," p. 640. See also C.L.R. James, *Mariners, Renegades, and Castaways: The Story of Herman Melville and the World We Live In* (1953) (Bewick/Ed, 1978).

<sup>83</sup> Only "Co'se Brer Rabbit know de game dat Brer Fox wuz fixin' fer ter play, en he 'termin fer ter outdo 'im...yer come Brer Fox, saddle en bridle on...en Brer Rabbit he mount, he did, en dey amble off." "Mr. Rabbit Grossly Deceives Mr. Fox," Harris, p. 69.

<sup>84</sup> "So BLACK FOLKS can take over." David Nelson, "Die Nigga!!!" 1969, on *The Original Last Poets, Right On!* (1971). In *American Pimp* (2000), a documentary, the only Caucasian pimp is a nigger named Whitefolks. Most of his stable is black, of course.

<sup>85</sup> Hegel, § 196, p. 119.

<sup>86</sup> Id., § 181, p. 111.

<sup>87</sup> Du Bois, p. 3.

<sup>88</sup> See Ventura. Hear also Miles Davis, *Bitches Brew* (1969).

<sup>89</sup> Du Bois, p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> This is a quote from the *Fight Club* DVD liner notes.

<sup>91</sup> Debord, § 210, p. 146.

# From Crusaders to Bystanders?: Recent Reinterpretations of Labor's Role in the Chinese Exclusion Movement<sup>1</sup>

BY TIMOTHY MESSER-KRUSE

**Editors' note.** Prof. Messer-Kruse was originally commissioned in June of 1999 by the journal *Labor History* to review Andrew Gyory's book, *Closing the Gate*. His detailed review was rejected because, as the editor put it, "it could be read as an attack on Dr. Gyory." However, Messer-Kruse was invited to resubmit an "article dealing with an overall approach that could include Gyory." This he did and this too was rejected on the grounds that it was "unpersuasive, insulting, and painful to read." Worried that maybe he had stepped over the line, Messer-Kruse asked a trusted colleague in a different historical field to review his work and assess whether it was improper and was told in an independent review, "nothing could be more in keeping with the standards of any discipline pretending to professionalism. If you can't write an essay that says rot is rot and get it published in a journal supposedly dedicated to history, mercy on us all." Though Messer-Kruse has revised his article somewhat, what is printed below is substantially the article that the labor history establishment would not touch.

Nearly twenty years ago labor historian Herbert Gutman asked his graduate students, "This event in North Adams needs to be looked at in a fresh light. Who wants to tackle it?"<sup>2</sup> Gutman's invitation was deceptively innocent. The event he referred to was the coming of a group of Chinese strikebreakers to Massachusetts in 1870. According to the conventional wisdom, the appearance of the Chinese in the East rekindled labor's nativism and was an important step towards passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. What was the "fresh light" Gutman felt needed to be cast on this

*Timothy Messer-Kruse is the author of The Yankee International: Marxism and the American Reform Tradition, 1848-1876. He teaches at the University of Toledo (Ohio).*

historical event? Were there sources that previously scholars had overlooked? Were there texts that others had misread? Or, perhaps, was there simply a feeling that labor had not been given its due; that labor should not shoulder responsibility for the passage of the nations' first racially exclusive immigration law?

Gutman himself had not long before tried to cast some fresh light on the history of the United Mine Workers and show them to be far more racially tolerant than they have been portrayed. This attempt, however, as historian Herbert Hill later showed, was not only flawed but riddled with distortions, half-truths, and misquotations. Gutman, it seems, was on a mission to polish the racial record of America's labor movement and after attempting to vindicate the racial record of the miners was enlisting his students in the task of cleansing labor's record of discrimination towards the Chinese.

One of Gutman's last students, Andrew Gyory, took up his mentor's challenge to revisit the existing literature on labor's anti-Chinese nativism. With all the characteristic enthusiasm of a disciple, Gyory shed 'fresh light' on the literature by lighting a bonfire. Onto the flames Gyory tosses the work "of nearly every labor historian who has treated the subject" from John R. Commons to Gwendolyn Mink.<sup>3</sup> Mink's work on labor nativism is only the latest in a long line of "faulty" interpretations, Gyory writes: "like countless historians before and after, she misunderstands the positions of workers and working-class leaders nationwide toward Chinese immigration in the late 1860s and 1870s."<sup>4</sup> All of the scholars who have examined labor's views of the Chinese have been "misled" by the disingenuous and wily politicians of the Gilded Age and thus have perpetrated what, if Gyory is correct, is one of the longest-running historical misconceptions in modern historiography.

The field of labor history has from its inception been troubled by the immigration of Chinese workers to America. As early as the nineteenth century, pioneering labor chronicler George McNeill devoted a long chapter of his seminal *Labor Movement: The Problem of To-day* in defense of the movement to bar them from American shores.<sup>5</sup> As the field professionalized in the early twentieth century, such fear of the Chinese carried over into academia as John R. Commons and his fellow pioneering labor historians described the anti-Chinese movement as "doubtless the most important single factor in the history of American labor, for without it the entire country might have been overrun by Mongolian labor..."<sup>6</sup> Up to the mid-

1960s, eminent labor historians continued to view the Chinese Exclusion Movement as one of labor's great victories.<sup>7</sup> But with the publication of Alexander Saxton's *The Indispensable Enemy* in 1971, a break was made with this long line of celebration of labor nativism. Saxton documented how the rallying cry of the 'Chinese Must Go' ultimately strengthened the power of party elites and weakened class organization. Though Saxton shifted most historians' judgement of the costs and benefits of the anti-Chinese movement, there remained unanimous agreement that workers and labor organizations were responsible for the rise and success of the Chinese Exclusion Movement.

In recent years this consensus has been challenged by a few labor historians who deny labor's role or even interest in the Chinese Exclusion Movement.<sup>8</sup> Where Commons and his successors excused labor's nativism on the grounds that it prevented the greater evil of race-mixing and wage exploitation, this emerging trend excuses labor nativism by asserting that it never existed or was not as important as previously thought, or was not a labor movement at all but was the product of political demagoguery at the highest levels. These historians overturn Commons not because his support of labor nativism was itself racist, but because he and all the labor scholars who have followed him have supposedly exaggerated and misrepresented labor's record and overlooked the judicious tolerance of eastern workers amid the pervasive nineteenth century climate of racism.

A widely-read example of this approach is on display in the textbook, *Who Built America*, a two-volume social history written by a who's-who of "new" labor historians.<sup>9</sup> In their first reference to the anti-Chinese movement in the 1870s, the authors of *Who Built America* strive valiantly to paint the trade union movement in heroic terms, standing up for civil rights and human equality in the face of the mounting prejudice of the age. *Who Built America* finds its champion in the largest union of the decade, the Knights of St. Crispin, describing it as a union that was "defying the wave of anti-Chinese feeling sweeping the nation." The text states categorically that "the Crispins organized a local of Chinese workers who had been brought to North Adams, Massachusetts to break a shoemakers' strike in 1870. One of the first organizations of factory workers, the Crispins practiced solidarity as well as preaching it." Clearly, if the largest labor union of the period was so welcoming of the Chinese immigrant worker as to organize them as members of their own un-

ion then the labor movement as a whole cannot be characterized as racist in this period.<sup>10</sup>

The only problem with *Who Built America*'s version of events is that they did not happen. The facts are not difficult to find. The Knights of St. Crispin helpfully provided a full list of affiliated locals in December of 1870, complete not only with addresses and the names of secretaries, but notations as to the predominate nationality of unions that had many immigrant members. There are listings for French locals and German ones, even a Chicago local that was "Scandinavian", but no locals that are Chinese. Where then is the evidence for this phantom Chinese union?<sup>11</sup>

The only citation given in *Who Built America* supporting its claim that the Crispins actually did organize a local of Chinese workers is Frederick Rudolph's article "Chinamen in Yankeedom" published in the *American Historical Review* in October of 1947. Rudolph in one brief line asserts that "They [Crispins] attempted without success to organize a Chinese lodge of St. Crispin which would agitate for wages of two dollars a day." Somehow, it seems, the authors of *Who Built America* confused Rudolph's limited assertion that the Crispins' attempted to organize a Chinese local for the fact of its having been organized. Rudolph's own source was an editorial in the journal, *The Nation*, that appeared on June 30, 1870, in which it was mentioned that, "One of the Crispin orators, addressing an anti-Chinese labor meeting at Albany, revealed the fact that an attempt had been made, he himself participating, to establish a Chinese lodge of Crispins in North Adams, and to persuade the Chinese that their labor was worth at least two dollars per day, and that they might oblige Mr. Sampson [their employer] to give them their due." Following the chain of evidence it can be seen that what *Who Built America* instructs us was a sterling example of the labor movement overcoming the racial prejudice of its day was in fact merely a claim made by one participant in the midst of a rally whose purpose was to protest against the immigration of Chinese workers. The translation of this flimsy evidence into an example of multicultural organizing is not only poor scholarship but also serves to disguise the true face of the Crispins' position on the Chinese question. The evidence that the Crispins were in fact leaders of the eastern anti-Chinese movement is abundant, though suffice to quote the words of the chief historian of the Crispins, "The Crispin agitation against the Chinese was continuous... Covert threats of violence to



the Chinese, pleas for legislation and speeches arousing workingmen, were the characteristic manifestations of hostility."<sup>12</sup>

More common than such exaggerated history writing are the deep silences that have pervaded much of the "New Labor History" regarding labor's Gilded Age nativism. Bruce Laurie's *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth Century America*, another introductory text meant for secondary students and undergraduates, gives students the impression that most Chinese workers were forcibly imported into the country. Its only reference to Chinese workers reads: "West Coast workers, enraged by the presence of Chinese labor, responded enthusiastically to Knight [Knights of Labor] organizers promising to end importation of the hated 'coolies.'"<sup>13</sup> Steve Babson, in *The Unfinished Struggle: Turning Points in American Labor, 1877-Present*, simply reads the Chinese and labor's protest against them out of history altogether. Not only is the popular national movement for exclusion of the Chinese not a "turning point," even its victims don't exist: Babson's book contains not a single reference to the Chinese, to the anti-Chinese movement, the Chinese Exclusion Act, or the sustained campaign of violence against Chinese-Americans in the Nineteenth Century.<sup>14</sup>

But until Andrew Gyory placed himself at the head of this new school of labor nativist denial with his doctoral dissertation, "Rolling in the Dirt: The Origins of the Anti-Exclusion Act" which was completed in 1991 and later revised into the book *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act*, no scholar had really taken up Gutman's challenge to "shed new light" on the whole issue.<sup>15</sup> Gyory's influential innovation is to assert that neither East Coast labor leaders nor their rank and file favored excluding the Chinese from America or discriminating against them in any way but merely were opposed to the system of contract labor which they saw as slavery in a different wrapper. Gyory wants us to understand that "although they were the only group with a distinct economic motive to favor Chinese exclusion, eastern workers—who made up the vast bulk of the working classes and the national labor movement—were largely indifferent to Chinese exclusion and played practically no role in the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act,"<sup>16</sup> that what we, with a century of hindsight, perceive to be nativism was actually a subtle defense of the concept of free labor and a compassionate concern for the rights of the Chinese themselves, and that what racist policies did come out of this period were not the product of labor

agitation but the backroom machinations of a few demagogues in Washington. This is a hard row to hoe because Gyory has to explain away the troublesome fact that neither the Republicans nor the Democrats included Chinese exclusion in their platforms until 1876, years after sinophobia had already become entrenched within the labor movement.<sup>17</sup>

To support his indifferent worker thesis, that "workers remained generally uninterested in Chinese exclusion" and "organized labor nationwide played virtually no role in securing the legislation," Gyory has to show that labor was not an early advocate of tightening the immigration laws for the Chinese.<sup>18</sup> Gyory asserts that "Chinese immigration remained dormant as a labor issue through 1868."<sup>19</sup> He finds that the National Labor Union (NLU) did not take it up, nor did labor meetings or the labor press. Gyory is correct that the East Coast labor movement was relatively silent up to 1869, but this may have been because few workers believed the Chinese were going to come, not because they tolerated their coming. Jonathon Fincher, the editor of Philadelphia's labor paper, *The Welcome Workman*, expressed this common sentiment when he wrote: "But our importing theorists (sic) would not advocate the bringing of Asiatics or Africans. And why? Simply because there is no money in it. It would not tend to still farther crowd their already overflowing coffers."<sup>20</sup> Perhaps the only easterner deeply concerned with the Chinese issue at this time was Ira Steward, the father of the eight-hour movement, whose economic theories pointed to the dangers arising from a growing population of such "cheap men."<sup>21</sup>

All this changed in 1869, a year after the signing of the Burlingame Treaty, the completing of the transcontinental railroad, the threats of employers to import Chinese workers east, the Memphis Chinese labor convention, and the labor-importing boosterism of huckster Cornelius Koopmanschap. In response, labor editor Andrew C. Cameron opened his journalistic campaign for Chinese Exclusion in February of 1869 and in addition to his own vitriolic editorials, devoted the pages of the *Workingman's Advocate* to the lengthy anti-Chinese diatribes of labor reformer Robert Hume.<sup>22</sup> This detail is problematic for Gyory, because this is years before the issue was taken up in Congress. Gyory finds, however, that Cameron's campaign "failed to catch fire... the labor journal received little support from its readers. A few subscribers echoed Hume's anti-Chinese epithets but called only for a ban on importation."<sup>23</sup> Fire is such a

relative thing. Many labor papers reprinted Cameron's and Hume's calls to action.<sup>24</sup> *The Workingman's Journal* of Kansas editorialized: "...the Coolies now being imported into this country will have the right of suffrage and the State will have no power to protect itself against the schemes of the monopolists who will control the votes of this servile race to the injury of the working men of this country."<sup>25</sup> As for the lack of interest and careful concern for the rights of Chinese immigrants among readers of the *Workingman's Advocate*, this is a dubious assertion as well. Several anti-Chinese letters, not mentioned by Gyory, are to be found in the *Workingman's Advocate* in that year.<sup>26</sup> If Cameron's attempts to push an anti-Chinese movement were such a failure, why was it that the National Labor Union tapped him to chair its Committee on Coolie Labor the following year? Why is it that in December of 1869 the Workingmen's Union of New York City devoted two weeks of meetings to the Chinese "cheap labor" issue, passed a number of resolutions "condemning the proposed importation of barbarians from China" and empanelled a committee to look into the matter?<sup>27</sup> Finally, at the 1869 NLU convention, Gyory finds it significant that "only importation was condemned." The final resolution was by no means an unambiguous acceptance of immigration and condemnation of importation but indicated the inextricable link that existed between the two. As Gyory accurately notes, the resolution that was approved by the NLU condemned "the importation of a servile race."<sup>28</sup> He even notes that after several days of debate a further clause that expressed an interest in the protection of Chinese immigrants was dropped. But he still concludes that labor had no interest in limiting the numbers of Chinese in America, only the manner in which they came.<sup>29</sup>

Most historians have dated the beginning of the eastern labor movement's anti-Chinese activities from the arrival of seventy-five Chinese workers brought in to break a strike in North Adams, Massachusetts. Gyory takes note of the mass meetings that erupted throughout the East Coast in the summer of 1870. But he finds that neither North Adams workers, leaders of the shoemakers union, nor other labor leaders who organized these meetings displayed any animosity toward the Chinese themselves or against the Chinese as a group. "Not one voiced antipathy toward the Chinese themselves, focusing instead on the issue of imported contract labor."<sup>30</sup> In order to make this case he has to strain his sources to the limit. In some cases he relies on sources of questionable objectivity, such as when

he uses the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics report as evidence for the fact that North Adams shoemakers showed no hostility toward Chinese workers themselves. Gyory does not inform the reader that the MBLS report was written by George McNeill and Ira Steward, both labor reformers and sinophobes themselves. He chooses to repeat the milder comments that Samuel P. Cummings made during a public meeting rather the more venomous ones he published in the labor press prior to the Chinese workers' arrival. He does not note that at the next international convention of the Crispins after the arrival of the Chinese in North Adams a letter from the California Chinese-hater General Winn was read, the substance of which reportedly was, "Down with the [Burlingame] treaty; and no Chinese emigrants." A year later, a labor meeting in New York's Cooper Union "by unanimous vote declared they would not support anybody who favored the immigration of Chinese."<sup>31</sup> One observer of labor affairs who called himself "An International" exhorted his fellow workers: "What is needed by all workingmen in the crisis is—no fiddling on the terms of immigration and importation, but an absolute bar set up against the further progress of these eastern locusts amongst us..."<sup>32</sup>

Gyory does not quote the exact words that the Crispins used in denouncing the employment of Chinese workers in North Adams. This is a ticklish issue because the Crispin's resolution reveals support not only for laws against "coolie" importation but for discrimination against the Chinese already in this country as well. This resolution that Gyory does not repeat uses the word "introduce" rather than "import" and noted that the Chinese should not be "introduced" because they cannot become citizens: "[we denounce] the attempt to crush the Crispin order by introducing for that purpose a class of servile laborers from Asia, who cannot become permanent citizens of this country."<sup>33</sup> At that time the Crispins knew very well that the Chinese were barred from citizenship because their own Senator Sumner had just the previous week unsuccessfully attempted to strike the word "white" from the nation's naturalization laws and their other Senator, Henry Wilson, had made headlines by breaking ranks and opposing the naturalization of the Chinese. Here, surely, was a golden opportunity for labor to demonstrate the sincerity of its distinction between importation and immigration. After all, shouldn't labor have supported Charles Sumner in attempting to open the gates of citizenship? Henry Wilson, by the way, was accused of casting his

vote at the behest of the Crispins. The reform newspaper *The Commonwealth* wrote "many people think he [Wilson] is acting as the representative of the Crispins in their opposition to Chinese labor."<sup>34</sup> Within a year Wilson was known as one of the chief advocates of bringing the Republican Party closer to the working man.<sup>35</sup> Isn't it significant that there was not one peep of protest from any labor body or labor journal (except in the pages of *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*) in support of Sumner's proposal or in protest of Wilson's vote?<sup>36</sup>

In history as in literature the truth of the moment is often found in the smallest of details. Gyory is correct in noting that at a similar protest meeting in Boston the speakers followed a "pro-immigration, anti-importation" stand. But he does not note that the meeting was advertised by a large poster that featured "a swift-footed celestial with five of [his] favorite rats on his shoulder, and his braided pigtail trailing far in the rear." Nor does he note that workers protested importation because they said it would reduce American workers to "the Chinese standard of rice and rats."<sup>37</sup> Though one can make the argument that in 1870 labor unions expressly demanded federal intervention to end importation, it is really difficult, given the abundant expressions of Chinese-hating found at labor rallies, to argue that labor wholeheartedly welcomed the Chinese immigrant to American shores.

Gyory does not recount how just months after the coming of the Chinese to North Adams, Massachusetts, a nearly identical number arrived to work in a steam laundry in Belleville, New Jersey. Why does Gyory pass over this event? After all, it is highly significant that within a year the growing number of Chinese workers in Belleville constituted the largest concentration of Chinese workers east of the Rockies. Even though the Chinese were not brought in to break a strike they had to be smuggled in under dead of night into a factory compound recently walled because of threats of violence and the factory's owner reportedly received death threats in the mail. A protest rally against the *presence* of the Chinese attracted not only a large crowd of Belleville locals, but four carriages of "mechanics" from nearby and working-class Passaic. This seems to indicate a large degree of "rank and file" interest in Chinese exclusion. At the rally local Democratic politicians appealed for workers' votes by promising to stop the "yellow menace" and urged them to vote against anyone "who favors coolie labor, or has anything to do with

the Chinese." When rumor spread that another Belleville factory was going to bring in Chinese workers arsonists burned it to the ground and the general feeling in the area was that workers set the fire to keep the Chinese away. Interestingly, the Chinese in Belleville apparently were not "cheap labor" at all, as they were reportedly paid the same amount as other workers for similar work.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout much of his book, whenever a labor spokesman lets fly some Chinese-hating diatribe, Gyory depicts him as a loose cannon. After John Swinton published his full-page condemnation of Chinese immigration in the New York *Tribune*, in which he called the Chinese "inferior," "depraved," "indecent and obscene," and that the struggle was one of "the *roast rat* against the *roast beef*" Gyory writes that Swinton's "language and imagery remained unmatched in labor circles in the East for years to come."<sup>39</sup> As I have already shown above, such language was not uncommon for labor meetings. More interestingly, the "imagery" Gyory finds so unique, the great rat-and-cow metaphor, was not only a staple of labor speeches then but for years to come (the ultimate expression comes decades later in Gompers' famous tract, "Meat Vs. Rice, American Manhood Versus Asiatic Coolieism," though this too is not to be found in Gyory's citations or bibliography). Swinton may even have borrowed this metaphor from a bona-fide grass roots labor activist, Ira Steward who wrote the year before: "A peasant of the Celestial Empire can live on rats, and his wages are gauged accordingly; but a Man accustomed to beefsteak, succeeds in getting work enough to buy it."<sup>40</sup> Only one week after the publication of Swinton's *Tribune* article, a labor meeting in Boston protested "attempts to introduce into the manufactories of this State a servile class of laborers from China" that would only lower the American workman "to the Chinese standard of rice and rats."<sup>41</sup> C. Ben Johnson, editor of the *Coachmakers' Journal* and secretary of the NLU, told his union brothers in Philadelphia six months later that their platform should include "Eight hours for a day's work. No greasy heathen workmen at a few pennies a day, rat diet and kennel accommodations. No contract Chinese. No slavery in any guise."<sup>42</sup>

Because it is undeniable that most of labor's journalistic spokesmen of the 1870s, Andrew Cameron, editor of the *Workingmen's Advocate*, C. Ben Johnson, editor of the *Coachman's Journal*, and John Swinton, editor of *Swinton's Paper*, to name but a few, were spread-eagled Chinese exclusionists, Gyory makes the case that

their readership was indifferent to their anti-Chinese appeals. Gyory attempts to marginalize the support for Andrew Cameron: "Rank-and-file attitudes challenged those of Andrew Cameron...[who] since 1869 had staunchly advocated Chinese exclusion."<sup>43</sup> There is little evidence to support this view. Cameron was a respected delegate to nearly every labor congress during his lifetime. If Cameron's views were "challenged" by the nation's rank and file, why did the nation's largest union, the Knights of St. Crispin, among many others, officially designate Cameron's *Workingman's Advocate* as one of its "official organs" in 1870?<sup>44</sup>

Up till this point in his book Gyory presents us with a total of two "assorted letters" (one unsigned and therefore untraceable as to its elite or mass origins) to demonstrate opposition to Cameron's editorial stance against Chinese immigration. From what evidence then is his claim that the rank and file had little interest in Chinese exclusion based? I would think the best evidence for mass working class opinion was the huge size of the crowds that gathered at the anti-Chinese protest rallies in the summer of 1870. After all, while many of the labor leaders and labor reformers who spoke from the stands did mix in a rhetorical distinction between immigration and importation in with their racism, this does not indicate which element more reflected the views of the audience. The best indicator of what the audience believed is what they were told they were attending and what they came for. These rallies were not advertised as "anti-importation but pro-immigration" protests" but as anti-Chinese "Indignation Meetings." The racist caricature used to advertise the Boston rally is good evidence of that.<sup>45</sup>

An even deeper logical conundrum appears when Gyory is forced to reckon with the spectacle of the whirlwind tour of California's anti-Chinese demagogue Denis Kearney through the eastern states in 1878. Greeted by excited throngs at every stop, hundreds of thousands in all before he returned to San Francisco, Kearney placed the punctuation point on the declaration labor had been writing for years—the Chinese bugaboo brings out the crowds and their passions. These are difficult facts to harmonize with Gyory's "indifferent worker" thesis. His solution is clever and innovative:

The class-based nature of Kearney's rhetoric and the often enthusiastic responses of his listeners suggest that he and his message "the Chinese must go" were popular with workers in

the East and Midwest... Such support, however, masks the divisiveness Kearney's visit caused within these groups. Rather than make assumption based on outward appearances, we must ask other questions: Who actually attended Kearney's rallies? Why did they attend? What can be said about individuals' true thoughts based on their participation in a crowd?... Although some answers must remain speculative, further inquiry reveals that appearances can be deceiving: what occurred on the surface differed sharply from what went on below.<sup>46</sup>

We then are to ignore the obvious facts of these events, "what occurred on the surface," and instead look to Gyory's speculations on "what went on below." Assuming for a moment that this is a sound historical method, why is it utilized only with those speakers in conflict with Gyory's "indifferent worker" theory and not those who rhetorically made the importation/immigration distinction. It appears that those "surface" expressions that confirm Gyory's thesis can stand without further excavation, but those that contradict it must be dug through to find their true meanings "below."

In digging in this manner, Gyory discovers that the crowds that cheered Kearney actually were not in favor of Chinese exclusion. This was because many of those who turned out to see Kearney were merely there out of "curiosity" and because "Kearney rallies were more entertainment than discourse, more political theater than political discussion, the meaning of crowd reactions remains open to conjecture."<sup>47</sup> Nor did it mean what it seemed to when at every stop Kearney would asked his audiences to endorse anti-Chinese resolutions which were always reported in the press as being carried by a throaty roar or a forest of hands. This is easily misinterpreted, Gyory finds, because such enthusiastic reaction to Kearney is actually evidence of the lack of understanding of his audience. "Does a momentary response by listeners actually indicate sincere agreement? ... The substance of his utterances may well have been secondary. The extreme nature of Kearney's speeches and resolutions also challenges credibility that his listeners fully endorsed them."<sup>48</sup> The logic here is clear, because large crowds roared their approval when Kearney condemned the Chinese in the most violent manner, they must have been acting without thought and their expression, though it is perhaps the only mark they ever left upon the historical record, must be questioned, even ignored, because they cheered too lustily.



Gyory is correct in writing that not everyone in the labor community was pleased with having Kearney associated with their organizations. But Gyory interprets all labor opposition to Kearney as opposition to the Chinese exclusion movement. In fact, labor leaders complained of Kearney for many reasons: conservative trade unionists were leary of his communism, communists thought him a very inconsistent socialist, and all were repulsed by his violent rhetoric. Many labor reformers hated his stand against women's suffrage, other leaders simply feared his growing power.<sup>49</sup>

Kearney's eastern tour finally provoked outright opposition after he accused Benjamin Butler's Massachusetts Greenbackers of selling out for not advocating an end to Chinese immigration. Though Gyory wants to make the Massachusetts Greenbackers' omission of a Chinese plank an indication that eastern labor wanted nothing to do with Kearneyism, it is clear that it is far more an indication of the lingering strength of abolitionist idealism and the requirements of political coalition in the Bay State. Butler himself was a fully reconstructed politician and he could hardly have won over the important support of Wendell Phillips and what was left of his circle of radicals with a nativist plank. Rather than seeing politics at work, Gyory wants to view the episode as workers' "ultimate rejection of Kearney."<sup>50</sup> So completely does he throw the Kearney tour down the memory hole that a couple of chapters along he can point to a meeting organized by the Chicago Trade and Labor Council that occurred two years after Kearney's frenzied eastern rallies and call it "the first full-blown, working-class, anti-Chinese meeting east of the Rockies."<sup>51</sup>

Kearney's eastern tour was certainly a complex event occurring at a politically complex moment in time, but to wishfully claim, as Gyory does, that the evidence shows that "'the free American laborer' east of the Rockies had repudiated Kearney and his cry, 'the Chinese must go'" is a tremendously one-sided interpretation of the facts.<sup>52</sup>

Gyory argues that by 1878, "The unceasing agitation on the West Coast had at last succeeded in winning over a powerful ally: the federal government."<sup>53</sup> This occurred not because virtually every labor journal and labor convention endorsed some change to the nation's immigration laws regarding the Chinese (as Gyory reluctantly admits), nor because labor rallies had demonstrated that the issue could bring thousands of workers into the streets (elsewhere in his book Gyory mentions that Denis Kearney was brought to New York

by eastern labor activists and “drew the largest crowd since the Civil War”) , but because politicians feared the political threat posed by communists, railroad strikers, and the Greenback Labor Party.<sup>54</sup> “From this crucible of political stagnation and labor violence, Chinese exclusion emerged as a savior to leaders in Washington.”<sup>55</sup> No doubt 1877 was a turning point politically for many reasons, but even accepting that the Greenback Labor Party frightened the mainstream parties to the extent Gyory believes, how did politicians know that stealing the Chinese issue would bring working class voters along? Gyory does not recognize the strangling logic he winds himself in when he writes: “Mass circulation of paper money, eight-hour legislation, and other [labor] reform remained an apostasy to most lawmakers. Chinese immigration restriction, however, offered an alternative. Eliminating the distinction between immigration and importation, politicians would fashion an issue to rally voters and perhaps defuse the Greenback frenzy.”<sup>56</sup> In other words, politicians “needed a way to steal their thunder” and so stole the issue from labor, which had succeeded by 1878 in demonstrating its power to mobilize working class support. This doesn’t jibe with Gyory’s thesis that “few workers in the East revealed much concern over Chinese immigration or Chinese exclusion.”<sup>57</sup>

Gyory claims at one point that in the spring of 1879, labor spoke with “deafening silence” on the Chinese issue, but elsewhere he writes that in March of 1879, “wage earners from Boston to Chicago held mass meetings to celebrate the new [California] charter and the apparent achievement of the Workingmen’s Party of California.”<sup>58</sup> California’s constitution enshrined not only exclusion, but also Jim Crowed the Chinese into ghettos and deprived them of employment by state-chartered corporations and public entities. It should be noted that Boston’s workers were the only ones that Gyory could find who specifically criticized the Jim Crow sections. Following his usual modus operandi, Gyory discounts these expressions of support because they were not sustained long enough for him. “And yet, workers dropped the issue almost immediately. At dozens of labor gatherings from Boston to Chicago in the following months for which records exist, Chinese immigration vanished from the working-class agenda, as it had so often in the past.”<sup>59</sup> But for something to vanish “often” doesn’t it have to reappear “often” too? In the next chapter we discover this “vanishing” could not have lasted too long for in August the New York Greenback Labor Convention proclaimed

Denis Kearney's Workingmen's Party of California "a sister organization" and promised it "both hands of fellowship."<sup>60</sup>

For a book about the views and actions of labor toward the Chinese, it is startling that there is only one sentence out of 259 pages that refers to the union label movement and this one sentence is incorrect. When the Cigar Makers' International Union (CMIU) adopted the anti-Chinese label, it launched a new phase in labor's opposition to the Chinese, for by attempting to rid an entire industry of Chinese workers, whether they had come to the U.S. in the last month or ten years before, the cigar makers demonstrated that their argument was with the Chinese as a people, not 'coolieism' as a system. Thus was born the modern union label. But Gyory consistently shows only the softer side of the CMIU. Gyory discusses at length the great New York Strike of 1877 when for one moment the CMIU transcended its historic pattern of racial exclusion. As for the racist union label movement itself, Gyory has only this to say: "Scattered anti-Chinese sentiment erupted in the spring when a Cincinnati cigar manufacturer hired forty laborers, and eastern cigar makers began pushing the union label—an innovation devised by western cigar makers for the sole purpose of informing customers that no Chinese laborers had worked on the product. Despite these actions, the Cigar Makers International Union said little about Chinese labor or immigration restriction that fall at its annual four-day meeting in Cleveland."<sup>61</sup> This sentence brilliantly downplays the fierce animosity within the CMIU against Chinese workers and the extent and character of the union label movement itself.<sup>62</sup> The CMIU adopted the racist label in 1880 and even years before that CMIU president Adolph Strasser, a man Gyory depicts as standing firmly in favor of free Chinese immigration, praised the "union stamp, by which cigars made by white men could be distinguished from those made by Chinese."<sup>63</sup> It is a highly debatable proposition that anti-Chinese sentiment, or support for the union label was "scattered." Note that Gyory does not, can not, categorically state that the CMIU Cleveland convention was silent on the Chinese issue. Rather, he wriggles out of the facts by saying they "said little." But Gyory does not care to inform the reader what they did say.

Anyone unfamiliar with the union movement's history of racial exclusion would not know after reading Gyory's book that the cigarmakers barred all non-whites from membership until 1872; or that in 1877 Samuel Gompers himself threatened violence if the Chi-

nese were brought to New York; or that even after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, Gompers' Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions (FOTLU) in 1886 demanded a "supplementary act... for the strictest enforcement of the present Anti-Chinese law."<sup>64</sup>

Gyory's thesis stands or falls upon the sincerity of labor's distinction between importation and immigration. Proponents of this new approach shun the idea that labor's importation/immigration distinction fed off the prevailing racial stereotypes of the Chinese as "servile" and "degraded" as well as the eight hour movement's economic arguments that wages were determined by character, including race and nationality.<sup>65</sup> There is much evidence that labor's spokesmen and most union members viewed Chinese workers in America, whether they were fresh off the boat or had spent the majority of their adult lives in the U.S., as "semi-slaves" and, much worse in the eyes of republican workers, as willing and satisfied "semi-slaves." This was why workers used the word "coolie" as a synonym for "Chinese." (Many other workers signed long term labor contracts, such as railroad construction workers, sailors, and lumberjacks, but they were not called simply 'coolies.') This is also the reason that workers refused to even recognize that the Chinese had it in them to stand up to their bosses and go on strike. Labor papers were not interested when the very same Chinese workers who had been brought to North Adams in 1870 went on strike in 1873, or when Chinese workers in Belleville, New Jersey repeatedly walked out for higher wages.<sup>66</sup> The one time a labor journal did take notice of a strike of Chinese workers it intentionally distorted the facts to conform to racist stereotypes. When Chinese workers at a cutlery factory in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania went on strike for higher wages, the *Workingman's Advocate* explained the protest not as a strike and not about wages, but as a riot sparked when the foreman banned opium smoking.<sup>67</sup>

Nor are the other possibilities for the use of the word "importation" seriously entertained. Gyory could have easily carried this idea further as he masterfully discusses how the Republican Party was divided over the issue of Chinese citizenship and how a powerful core of Radicals continued to push for a color-blind standard. But he doesn't accept the possibility that it was simply politic for labor to couch its demands in the equalitarian language of the hour. Such a situation was most clear in Massachusetts where labor counted on

friends such as Wendell Phillips and Senator George Frisbie Hoar, both men who once praised the merits of the International Workingmen's Association and who defended the Chinese down to the lonely bitter end of the exclusion bill. Some mainstream politicians, who had little overall interest in civil rights or racial equality, made the same rhetorical distinction between immigration and importation as labor reformers did. Allan Thurman, an Ohio Democrat, did so in a stump speech in 1870. Could such a distinction have been a political imperative in a nation filling up with immigrants? Doesn't it reflect more the immigrants' fears of nativism than it does a fondness for Chinese immigrants? Other scholars have observed that labor's importation/immigration rhetoric served a definite political purpose. Building on the work of Alexander Saxton, Terry E. Boswell writes "The peculiar combination of prejudice and abolitionist rhetoric in the anti-Chinese ideology... condemned slavery (in the form of coolies) without condemning racism, thus creating an ideological bridge between anti-slavery populists and 'Jim Crow' southerners."<sup>68</sup>

Thus some labor leaders could have it both ways. They could argue for a ban on importation and not alienate powerful Republican radicals, nor contradict the internationalist principles of labor solidarity (if they had any) and still rest secure in the knowledge that this would close the door to the Chinese anyway. Even Gyory recognizes this possibility and but disregards it: "Even as 'pro-labor' politicians such as William Mungen and labor editors such as Cameron argued that no difference existed between immigration and importation—or at least no difference worth fighting for—eastern workers continued to distinguish between the two." (65)

I do not doubt that the immigration/importation distinction was honestly held by some individuals. I have to wonder whether there was some pattern in the usage of these terms. Might this distinction have been used more sincerely by some and more politically by others? Though he doesn't pursue these questions, Gyory indicates at one point that they crossed his mind: "These (importation/immigration distinctions) were not simply the views of a handful of socialists or radicals but ideas carefully expressed by a great variety of American wage earners from the Atlantic to the Mississippi."<sup>69</sup> Gyory presents no evidence to back up this assertion, though I think the record is clear that there were a number of factional groupings who had different attitudes toward the Chinese and used the immigration/importation rhetoric for different purposes. Clearly, the

International Workingmen's Association roughly broke down along these lines: the Yankee "Spring Street" faction upheld the abolitionist principles of equal rights and a color-blind government while the German-American "Tenth Ward Hotel" group placed political strategy ahead of principle and rallied to the defense of labor against the "cheap labor" of the Chinese. Likewise, the Boston labor reform community split between the more sinophobic eight-hour men, such as Ira Steward and George McNeill, and Wendell Phillips and his radical abolitionist followers.<sup>70</sup> Labor's Coolie/Chinese distinction was more likely a rhetorical device used to harmonize the discordant combination of laborite equality and racial exclusion for the ears of a generation of Yankees labor activists who supported Lincoln and the project of equality. That it was more prevalent in the early 1870s than in the later 1870s was less because professional politicians through their demagoguery on the issue pushed it aside, but because the culture and power of Radical Reconstruction had safely died away.

In the end, workers and labor leaders had the opportunity to make the meaning of their importation rhetoric clear to history. When Congress began considering legislation restricting immigration rather than indentured contract importation, labor could have denounced the move. Over and over labor was given the opportunity to clarify its stand and each time it expressed its approval of exclusionary measures. In 1878 Congress passed the "Fifteen Passenger" law capping the number of Chinese allowed on ships and Gyory writes, "Some labor leaders no doubt, greeted the bill with reluctant approval..." Translated, this means that all of the labor leaders or journals that Gyory could locate who took an issue on this bill were approving. He then spends several pages explaining why the lack of sources is more significant than the unanimity of the ones he found.<sup>71</sup> In 1880, when Congress endorsed the Angell Treaty abrogating the free immigration provisions of the standing treaty between China and the U.S., the FOTLU urged passage and Gyory also finds that "several labor papers printed appeals from Burgman and other Californians urging eastern workers to join their anti-Chinese crusade."<sup>72</sup> Again, Gyory could find no dissenting labor voices. Finally, in 1882, when Congress enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act slamming the door on an entire nation, Gyory reluctantly observes that, "In the spring of 1882, organized labor rallied behind the bill to ban Chinese immigrants."<sup>73</sup> Gyory tempers this fact by finding it significant that

in supporting the exclusion act many labor leaders stuck by their importation rhetoric, but this was indeed empty rhetoric for their feet didn't follow their mouths. Each time labor was put to the test and each time labor assented, sometimes even celebrated. Nowhere does Gyory record a single labor organization protesting even one of these steps. The only reasonable conclusion is that labor's importation rhetoric masked a deeper desire to rid the country of what it perceived as the threat of "servile cheap labor." Gyory's conclusion that the anti-Chinese laws that emerged were "not the legislation most workers had wanted" remains an opinion he is entitled to, though hardly proven by his own evidence.<sup>74</sup>

Following closely on Gyory's heels, Robert E. Weir has recently revised the history of the Knights of Labor, finding that they really weren't as prejudiced toward the Chinese as other scholars have presumed. "Applying a blanket anti-Chinese label to the Knights lacks nuance, and ignores context," he writes. East of the Rockies, Weir claims, anti-Chinese expressions were "a mere rhetorical ploy."<sup>75</sup> Does Weir mean to imply that the workers on the East Coast were not really anti-Chinese because unlike their West Coast counterparts they didn't riot and lynch Chinese workers? Is the persistent lobbying of Congress for a change in immigration laws mere rhetoric? Doesn't it have a real world material effect when those laws are actually passed? Weir, like Gyory asserts that "anti-Chinese attitudes were imposed on labor from the top down for the most part." The American Social History Project's phantom Chinese Crispin local pops up here again as Weir claims that "the Knights of St. Crispin tried to organize the Chinese." Not content to leave well enough alone, Weir builds on the Chinese Crispin myth by imagining a whole scenario of cause and effect around it: "When striking Knights of St. Crispin failed to organize the Chinese, leaders blamed the contract labor system, not individual Chinese." Weir does not have any evidence for this chain of events or for his assertion that "the bulk of [Crispin] workers' anger was directed at Capital, not the Chinese." This statement would seem less secure had Weir revealed that these same workers' actually responded by undertaking a campaign to bar all Chinese immigrants from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.<sup>76</sup>

Like the phantom Chinese Crispin Union, Weir's description of the Knights' views of the Chinese overreaches his sources. In the

first pages of his article, Weir argues that, "Many a commentator has misinterpreted the Knights of Labor by assuming that its national leadership spoke for the rank and file. That was seldom the case." This is a fine method to pursue, but Weir, like Gyory, fails to find evidence of the mind of the rank and file and falls back on the same leadership sources that they both fault other historians for relying on. Again and again Weir dismisses eastern anti-Chinese expressions with no evidence at all. Labor publisher John Swinton's frequent anti-Chinese screeds are claimed to have fallen on the ears of the "uninterested" in the east and "most of his admirers simply ignored him on the issue"; Knights' leader Terrence Powderly is correctly noted as a serious sinophobe but Weir claims he "was never able to convert East Coast radicals to his cause"; or more broadly Weir concludes that most Knights were not "active discriminators." None of these claims are backed up with any evidence whatsoever—they are pure speculation.<sup>77</sup>

Many of the Knights' leaders have a long documentary trail of sinophobic statements or activities but this does not deter Weir from concluding that east coast Knights were "lukewarm" on the Chinese issue.<sup>78</sup> Typical of the evidentiary problem Weir faced was the record of Joseph Buchanan, a popular executive board member of the east coast Knights, who was for most of the 1880s the editor of the rabidly anti-Chinese Denver *Labor Enquirer*. But where such an uncomfortable fact cannot be directly denied, it can be adeptly side-stepped. Weir quotes from Buchanan's self-serving memoir published thirty years later to find that Buchanan was a "reluctant convert to the anti-Chinese cause."<sup>79</sup> He then closes the deal by explaining (without any evidence or citations—again using Gyory's technique of finding nothing, therefore not having to cite anything) that once Buchanan moved out of Denver and reestablished his paper in Chicago, its "tone was far less strident on the Chinese question." Perhaps Prof. Weir did not read the manifesto Buchanan published in his Chicago paper on March 19, 1887 that contained thirty-six detailed reasons "Why it is Impossible for the White Man to Assimilate with the Monoglian Leper." Or perhaps he missed the editorial on July 7, 1888 entitled "California's Curse" that describes Chinese immigrants as "dumb and helpless chattels" and finds that prostitution in San Francisco is the product of "Mongolian morality." Did he miss "Boycott the Monkeys" of February 23, 1887, where the Chinese are equated to apes? "We draw the line at Chinamen, animals



who wear their tails on their head, but we have no use for the posterior sort."

Weir claims that, "in the eight-year interim between North Adams and Kearney's visit, eastern workers had largely ignored the rising tide of anti-Chinese agitation fomenting west of the Rockies." Whatever the mass of eastern workers were thinking in those years is difficult to ascertain, but if by this Weir means that the labor press was silent on the Chinese question, he is simply wrong.<sup>80</sup>

Like Andrew Gyory, Weir faces a tough uphill climb explaining away the Knights' record of support for the anti-Chinese violence of their western brethren. Not easily explained are the shocking number of violent incidents that Knights' members took part in and that the Knights' eastern leadership defended. Bloody pogroms against the Chinese occurred in Denver in 1880, Seattle and Tacoma in 1885 and 1886, Rock Springs, Wyoming in 1885. In Idaho alone there were eleven anti-Chinese riots in the last third of the nineteenth century resulting in the deaths of twenty-five Chinese.<sup>81</sup> The worst of these episodes and the one that was most vocally defended by the Knights of Labor, was the massacre of Chinese miners in Rock Springs. In a striking example of blaming the victim, Weir writes that "The Chinese consulate charged that the massacre took place because Chinese miners refused to take part in a KOL strike, or take out membership in the order. There is little reason to doubt this."<sup>82</sup> Conveniently placing the responsibility for such a reprehensible claim in the mouths of the Chinese themselves, Weir wants us to believe that the murdered Chinese could have escaped their fate had they simply paid up their union dues.<sup>83</sup> This is a gross distortion of both the Chinese consul's remarks and the facts of the Chinese miner's situation. In the midst of his lengthy report on the Chinese consulate's independent investigation of the massacre, Ambassador Cheng Tsau Ju writes, "There seems to have been no complaint as to discrimination in wages, the only motive alleged for the assault being the refusal of the Chinese to join the other miners in their 'strikes.'" Thus, Weir confuses the ambassador's report of others' opinion for his own—all Ambassador Ju was reporting was that white miners had demanded that Chinese miners respect their strike, not join their union. The bit about Chinese workers provoking the white miner's wrath because they refused to "take out membership in the order" is a complete fabrication, not be found anywhere in either the independent Chinese investigation of events, the Congressional hearings

on the massacre, or in contemporary scholarly studies of the subject. Overall, Ju's letter clearly states his government's opinion that the riot was primarily the result of racial hatred and a lack of protection afforded his countrymen by the territorial authorities.<sup>84</sup> Finally, not only is there absolutely no evidence of any attempt on the part of white miners to include Chinese members in their union, the record clearly indicates that the main goal of their union was to remove the Chinese from their midst.

Weir goes on to describe a Knights' leadership that was "embarrassed" by the Rock Springs massacre perpetrated by their own members. Weir claims that for several years after this tragedy in September of 1885 the "once-strident anti-Chinese remarks were toned down" in the KOL's national organ, *The Journal of United Labor*, until May of 1887 when an anti-Chinese letter "ended a relative silence" on the issue.<sup>85</sup> Some silence. In March of 1887 the lead editorial in *The Journal of United Labor* complained that "[New York] is full of cheap labor... fifty thousand paupers, who can be fed as cheaply as the Chinese, are landed every year in this port." Then in a frank and revealing admission of the true basis of the rhetorical doublespeak that Weir and Gyory cheerfully accept at face value, *The Journal of United Labor* explains, "The subject of restricting the tide of emigration to our shores must perforce soon receive the attention of our legislators. There are many solicitous for the welfare of our country, not confined to labor, who express their convictions without stint. But all feel the delicacy of the subject, and shrink from the public expressions of views regarded as widely at variance with the spirit of our institutions," but "the pouring in upon us of an overwhelming tide of ignorant and irresponsible humanity from monarchical countries, then admitted to all the privileges of citizenship. . . here rests the objection."<sup>86</sup>

A month later (but still during this supposed silence) *The Journal of United Labor* devoted its entire front page to an article on "Free Trade vs. Ignorance," that compared the increasing immigration of Europeans with their "idleness or depravity and feebleness of fibre, mental and bodily"; foreigners "inured by heredity and experience to hunger and low wages, and thus alone able to compete with the American laborer. It is the Chinese case over again, not so strongly accentuated and stripped of the prejudice which is felt to an utterly alien race, but the principle is identical."<sup>87</sup> In the very next issue it was the turn of the "cheap Italian and Hungarian" workers. The

Knights now expressed regret for focusing so much attention on the Chinese that they let the scum of Europe slide in behind their backs. "(I)t is evident that if the attention of our wage-earners had not been till now concentrated on convict competition and Chinese labor, they would already have gone much further than to demand the cessation of imported foreign labor under contract."<sup>88</sup> How "embarrassed" could an organization be that, while the Chinese workers' bodies were still fresh in their graves, could publish a lengthy and detailed apology for the union killers written by a Knights' organizer in Connecticut?:

History is making daily, as for instance, the late massacre of Chinese laborers in Wyoming. The *morale* and the policy of that occurrence should be discussed in every Assembly in the land. ...I may tell you here what my reflections have been upon this Wyoming business. If coolly and deliberately calculated it was a most cruel and wicked deed, and its perpetrators cannot be too severely punished. But it does not seem to have been planned; rather it seems to have been an outbreking of long pent-up feelings. Terrible in its effects, it is true, but so are the tornado and the earthquake which occur in the ministrations of a Providence which, on the whole, is wise and beneficent. The miners of Rock Springs seem to have been unhappy men...What, then, must have been their feelings when hope, the one thing that made their bitter toil and privation bearable, was taken away by the introduction of a servile and more degraded class of laborers. ...the Asiatic knows nothing of the home and its elevating, sanctifying influences. In politics he is a clod, or one of an immense herd. His custom is to follow he knows not why, the sound of some bell strapped upon the neck of one of his followers, or to be followed by a prodding stick. Weak as he is at home, the Chinaman is weaker here...[and] Capitalists, in their haste and greed, have brought this barbarous people into competition with American labor.<sup>89</sup>

Hardly the "silence on Rock Springs and other ugly anti-Chinese incidents" that Weir claims existed in the pages of *The Journal of United Labor*.

Certainly there were voices within the Knights of Labor who viewed the Chinese through the lens of class rather than race. Many

of the radically egalitarian members of the defunct International Workingmen's Association attempted to carry on their crusade within the loose structure of the Knights. But both Weir and Gyory confuse the actions of this small faction within the Knights of Labor for the policies of the larger body. For example, Weir calls the attempted organization of a Chinese local in New York City, "the KOL's boldest and most controversial experiment in Chinese organization," but this attempt can hardly be credited to the organization that ultimately prevented it.<sup>90</sup>

The evidence could not be more clear. A small faction of former Internationals assisted laundry workers headed by one Wah Saing to organize a Knights local of their own.<sup>91</sup> Realizing the hostility a Chinese union would face in getting a charter, Wah Saing used the alias of Jose Dolaro to hide his true nationality. When news of the organization of this union was published, the outcry came from both the West, from the *Denver Labor Enquirer*, and the East, from *John Swinton's Paper*. The General Secretary of the Knights of Labor denied Wah Saing and his comrades membership, a move that was overwhelmingly ratified by a subsequent general convention of the union. The labor radicals of DA 49 eventually included Chinese members in a larger mixed assembly of their own.

In Weir's hands this story plays differently. Rather than reporting that Secretary Lichtman had actually denied the Chinese locals a charter, Weir says that "Litchman (sic) denied that a charter had been granted." Subsequently, these "denials quickly evaporated" under press scrutiny—implying that indeed a charter had been issued. When the issue came to a vote in the 1888 Knights convention, Weir writes that "the 95-42 vote reveals that nearly one-third of delegates were considerably more sympathetic to the Chinese than most historians have realized." Is the glass half empty or half full, or in this case, two-thirds empty and one-third full?

Interestingly, Weir does not actually quote from Lichtman's denial. Here is what Secretary Lichtman actually said: "Dear Sir and Bro. No charter has ever been granted to any assembly composed of Chinese, and in all probability never will. Yours Fraternally, Chas. H. Lichtman, Gen. Sec."<sup>92</sup> There is no evidence that Lichtman was covering up the existence of the Chinese local. Not only was it reported at the time in the labor press that Lichtman and the General Executive Board refused to grant the Chinese unions charters, but that these unions were quickly disbanded.<sup>93</sup>

Such finessing of the evidence is outdone by the complete fabrication of another Chinese union that Weir claims was organized in Philadelphia. Imagining such a union is vitally important to Weir's argument as it would provide evidence that pro-Chinese activity was not limited to the radical faction in New York but was evident elsewhere in the Knights organization. Accordingly, Weir claims that "Philadelphia Knights also organized two Chinese assemblies..."

Weir's authority for the existence of these Philadelphia Chinese unions is Philip Foner's *History of the Labor Movement*, a source of spotty reliability. Foner only cites one source to establish this union's existence, *John Swinton's Paper* from July 10, 1887. Here is the only reference to the Chinese in that issue:

In reference to the Chinese Knights, we can state officially that though application was made at Philadelphia for their two assemblies in existence, Timothy P. Quinn of D.A. 49, being their preceptor, when word reached 49 that the executive board refused to grant them charters, the assemblies were dissolved and the Mongolians transferred to a mixed assembly.<sup>94</sup>

Clearly, Philip Foner made a simple mistake: he confused the reference to Philadelphia for a different Chinese local when, in fact, Philadelphia is only mentioned here because it was the location of the national headquarters of the Knights of Labor and the location of the executive board that had denied them membership. Timothy P. Quinn was a member of the radical faction of New York District Assembly 49 and the only "Mongolians" reported on here are Wah Saing and his comrades in New York. Had Weir tracked down his sources he would have easily found this, but then, his important Philadelphia Chinese local would have vanished without a trace.

Weir does not want to admit that DA 49 was a lone voice in the Knights organization arguing that "D.A. 49 clearly had an effect." The effect that he finds is that, "By 1888, official KOL journals were more circumspect in their attacks on the Chinese, as Powderly and his cronies generalized the question to the dangers of imported labor...the Chinese were lumped with Hungarians, Slavs, Italians, and other immigrants perceived as imported threats to native-born workers."<sup>95</sup> Surely this is not evidence of a softening of the Knights' nativism but a broadening of it to include other ethnic groups. It does not abandon the logic of the anti-Chinese crusade but applies its ar-

guments and prejudices to other minorities. It is illogical in the extreme to view such a continuity of nativist prejudice as evidence of the influence of the most internationalist element of the union. In the end, except for the handful of radicals in New York, Weir's revised Knights seem well blinded in both eyes.

Such works as these are counterbalanced by many other fine studies of labor's racial attitudes, politics and consciousness, but they do comprise a subtle trend in the field—a quiet movement to preserve a sense of labor heritage built on constructed fantasies of interethnic solidarity, tolerance, and transcendence of the pervasive climate of racism in America. It is impossible to know exactly what has motivated the spread of this trend at the very end of the twentieth century—aspects of it appear to be rooted in a vague romanticism of labor's great struggle while at the same time there are more focused ideological elements involved. Just as Karl Marx supported purges of women's rights advocates and spokesmen for racial equality from the First International on pragmatic political grounds, so there may be those who feel that there are good contemporary political reasons to whitewash the record of the labor movement—it is, after all, today a movement facing a demographic revolution in which white men have become a minority of members. Some may not be able to accept the reality of a labor movement that pursues its racial identity more vigorously than its historical mission to overthrow capitalism.

Whatever may be the case, hopefully the sifting and winnowing, the free criticism and debate that are supposed to be the heart of academic inquiry will, in the end, work towards truth.

---

#### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to William H. Longton for lending me his keen editorial eye. Though his suggestions improved many stylistic elements of this paper, all the arguments, criticisms, and flaws within are mine alone.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), xi.

<sup>3</sup> Gyory, 11.

<sup>4</sup> Gyory, 12.

<sup>5</sup> George E. McNeill, *The Labor Movement: The Problem of To-day*. (Boston, A.M. Bridgman & Co.; New York, The M.W. Hazen Co, 1887).

<sup>6</sup> Commons, et al, *History of Labour in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1918), vol. II, 252–253. Frank Tracy Carlton expressed a typical sentiment when he wrote that “Physical and psychological differences between the American and the

Asiatic make assimilation of the Oriental immigrants practically impossible, and, therefore, multiply the political and racial complications which have accompanied European immigration. Any considerable influx of Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, or Hindus would evolve a yellow problem not unlike the Negro problem." (Frank Tracy Carlton, *The History and Problems of Organized Labor* [D.C. Heath & Co.: Boston, 1911], 354.)

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Rayback wrote when workers succeeded in pressuring Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act "the menace of coolie labor never again arose to threaten the welfare of American workmen." (Joseph G. Rayback, *A History of American Labor* [The Free Press: New York, 1966], 142.) Even as late as the mid-1970s, racist characterizations of Chinese immigrants could be found in general works of labor history such as M. B. Schnapper's, *American Labor: A Pictorial Social History*, who wrote of labor's attempts to limit the "yellow peril" of "the docile, squint-eyed Chinese." (M.B. Schnapper, *American Labor: A Pictorial Social History* [Public Affairs Press: Washington, D.C., 1975], 105.)

<sup>8</sup> Examples include Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate*, discussed at length below, and Robert Weir, "Blind in One Eye Only: Western and Eastern Knights of Labor View the Chinese Question," *Labor History* 41:4 (Winter 2000), 421-436. Gyory himself perceives labor historians as being divided into two camps: "An ideological cold war has erupted among historians of labor, immigration, and race. Some, such as David Roediger and Herbert Hill, stress how racist white workers have been in American history... Other historians, such as Herbert Gutman, Bruce Laurie, and Eric Arnesen, acknowledge this racism, but argue that in certain instances white workers have overcome their prejudice..." , *New Politics* #29, Summer 2000, 51-59.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce Levin, et. al., *Who Built America?: Working People and the Nation's Economy, Politics, Culture, and Society*, (Pantheon Books: New York, 1989).

<sup>10</sup> Bruce Levin et.al., *Who Built America?*, 536; for details of the North Adams controversy see Frederick Rudolph, "Chinamen in Yankeeedom: Anti-Unionism in Massachusetts in 1870," *American Historical Review*, 53 (October 1947), 1-29; Stuart Creighton Miller, *The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882*, (Berkeley, 1969), chap. 8; Gunter Barth, *Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850-1870*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1964), 198-202.

<sup>11</sup> "A List of Lodges, Numbers, and Post Office Addresses of the Order of the Knights of St. Crispin, Dec. 1, 1870," State Historical Society of Wisconsin Pamphlets, L 824.

<sup>12</sup> Don D. Lescohier, *The Knights of St. Crispin, 1867-1874: A Study in the Industrial Causes of Trade Unionism* (Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, No. 355: Madison, 1910), 37.

<sup>13</sup> Bruce Laurie, *Artisans into Workers: Labor in Nineteenth Century America* (New York, Noonday Press, 1989), 150.

<sup>14</sup> Steve Babson, *The Unfinished Struggle: Turning Points in American Labor, 1877-Present* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1999).

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

<sup>16</sup> Gyory, 14.

<sup>17</sup> For the best summary of the legal history of exclusion see Benjamin B. Ringer, *"We The People" And Others: Duality and America's Treatment of its Racial Minorities* (Tavistock Publications: New York, 1983), 609-680.

<sup>18</sup> Gyory, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Gyory, 26.

<sup>20</sup> *Welcome Workman* (Philadelphia), Feb. 15, 1868.

<sup>21</sup> Steward's standard-of-living arguments were a mixture of both materialist and racist premises. It depends on an economic theory that holds that wages are fixed by the standard of living that workers settle for and upon a world view that holds that people of different races have intrinsically different levels of tastes and appetites just as they supposedly have different levels of "civilization." Early strains of this line of economic thinking can be found in the writing of John Stuart Mill and Karl Marx, but in America its seminal formulator was Ira Steward, the Boston labor activist who has gone down in history as the "father of the eight-hour day." From Steward this theory of racial wages found its way into the mainstream of America's labor movement. (Timothy Messer-Kruse, "Chinese Exclusion and the Eight-Hour Day: Ira Steward's Political Economy of 'Cheap Labor', a paper read before the Pullman Strike Centennial Conference, University of Indiana-Terre Haute, Sept. 24, 1994; Lawrence Glickman, "Workers of the World Consume: Ira Steward and the Origins of Labor Consumerism," *International Labor and Working Class History*, 52, Fall 1997, 72-86.)

<sup>22</sup> Gyory, 29.

<sup>23</sup> Gyory, 35.

<sup>24</sup> c.f. *The American Workman*, July 31, 1869.

<sup>25</sup> *The Workingman's Journal* (Kansas), Feb. 4, 1870.

<sup>26</sup> Gyory overlooks a number of anti-Chinese letters in the *Workingman's Advocate* of that year. "J.T.C." wrote from NY that the Chinese must not be allowed to come because the Chinese "can live on a third less than we can...is ignorant and depraved, and...he will submit to any unjust taxation..." (*Workingman's Advocate*, July 31, 1869.) "E." also from New York, wrote that he would probably not object if the Chinese came and settled "on farms of their own in the western country. It is, however, proposed to get their labor... (and) We should strongly object to having the Chinese come here to benefit capital..." (*Workingman's Advocate*, Aug. 7, 1869.) As for calling "only for a ban on importation," "Mountaineer" from Schuylkill County deep in the coal country of Pennsylvania writes after a lengthy anti-Chinese screed: "We won't have Chinese. There are too many Chinese here already and we want them sent back." (*Workingman's Advocate*, July 31, 1869.) Gyory rests his case for the lack of labor interest in the Chinese issue in 1869 on the two writers out of all those that appeared who supported the equal rights of the Chinese. He quotes the one letter most amenable to his thesis: "This powerful vision of workers challenging 'slaveholders' and 'capitalists' would galvanize many American wage earners for years. As a subscriber from the Midwest observed, 'Let all working men be united. . . [and] the influx of people from China, Ireland and Germany will then bless the



nation." But this subscriber's letter was not as supportive of Chinese immigration as Gyory's edited quotation makes it out to be. This portion of the letter was actually a plea to disregard the "Coolie Question" in favor of the more important one of monetary reform, a reform which would stimulate the economy so much that there would be no threat from foreign labor. The missing text within Gyory's ellipsis makes this clear: "Then let all working men *be united* in securing reform of the monetary system; giving plenty of sound currency, and a low rate of interest; omitting all unimportant and side issues for the present, the influx of people from China, Ireland, and Germany will then bless the nation." (*Workingman's Advocate*, Aug. 21, 1869.)

<sup>27</sup> *New York World*, Dec. 4 & 17, 1869.

<sup>28</sup> *New York World*, Aug. 19, 1869.

<sup>29</sup> Gyory, 36.

<sup>30</sup> Gyory, 42. Gyory attempts to pass off the massive protest meeting that took place in New York's Tompkins Square Park against the North Adams Chinese as some kind of multicultural festival. Gyory has William Cashman of the Tailors Union saying to the throng: "To the Chinaman as an emigrant there are no objections, but when they are brought here in masses, and under contract, it was time something should be done." (Gyory, 42-43.) The *World*, whose coverage was the most extensive of New York's papers, quotes Cashman saying further: "We have no objection to these men coming as emigrants; but when we find them coming here under contract, and that they are to be carried back to their own country dead or alive, we object and we have a right to; we have every objection to their being carried back dead, because in that shape they make manure for their country." Nor does he care to quote Cashman's apparent call for mob action against the Chinese: "We must say now that we will not allow this while we have a hand to raise or guns or bayonets to oppose it. (Applause.) ... When you see Chinamen going into your shops, working in your buildings, then under these circumstances you have a right to protect against it..." Gyory does not inform the reader of the anti-Chinese racism that pervaded nearly every speaker's quoted remarks. He does not note that Mr. Griffin, of the stairbuilders' union, kicked off the festivities by calling the Chinese "a barbaric element," "a degraded race who have no self-respect." He does not find it important that Mr. Thomas Masterson followed with a few resolutions including one denouncing "forced importation of the lowest and most degraded of the Chinese barbaric race" and against being compelled to "associate with the degraded labor of Asia, and such association debase our manhood, destroy our morals, and prostitute our virtues by witnessing the horrors of servility, sodomy, and social degradation." Or that John Ennis of the plasterers' union talked of the "barbaric Mongolian race," a race that "can sustain life on what anyone of the Circassian (sic) race would starve on." (*New York World*, July 1, 1870.)

<sup>31</sup> *Workingman's Advocate*, June 2, 1871.

<sup>32</sup> *Workingman's Advocate*, May 13, 1871.

<sup>33</sup> *Commonwealth* (Boston), July 16, 1870. Nor does Gyory inform the reader that in June of 1869 Samuel P. Cummings, leader of the Crispins, the largest union in Massachusetts, published his analysis of the Chinese threat in which he vaguely threat-

ened Chinese immigrants: "I should not blame the Chinese for coming here in search of employment, but I should fear a conflict in which the *coolie* would suffer if an attempt was seriously made to introduce them here because the Crispins would be by no means the only sufferers." (*New York Tribune*, May 1, 1869; *The American Workman*, June 19, 1869.) Note also how Cummings uses the terms Chinese and Coolie interchangeably. Just before the Chinese arrived in Massachusetts Cummings, warned his fellow workers to "prepare to give way to these pig-tailed Chinese when they come." (*The American Workman* (Boston), June 5, 1869.) He didn't seem so concerned to call them "coolies" then. At the time the *Lowell Daily Citizen and News* reported that Cummings hinted of terrible consequences for any Chinese worker who took the train to North Adams. The *News* asked, "Does Cummings mean to say that he is going to have them thrown off the track?" (*Lowell Daily Citizen and News*, June 30, 1870.)

<sup>34</sup> *The Commonwealth*, July 7, 1870.

<sup>35</sup> *New York World*, Nov. 21, 1871; *Boston Globe*, June 5, 1872.

<sup>36</sup> *Woodhull & Claflin's Weekly*, April 6, 1872

<sup>37</sup> *Daily Advertiser* (Boston), June 30, 1870; *Boston Investigator*, July 6, 1870.

<sup>38</sup> Daniel Liestman, "Chinese Labor at the Passaic Steam Laundry in Belleville," *New Jersey History* 1994 112(1-2), 20-33.

<sup>39</sup> Gyory, 45.

<sup>40</sup> *American Workman*, July 31, 1869.

<sup>41</sup> *Daily Advertiser* (Boston), June 30, 1870; *The Boston Investigator*, July 6, 1870.

<sup>42</sup> *Workingman's Advocate*, Dec. 10, 1870.

<sup>43</sup> Gyory, 44. Looking beyond the labor press, what does it say about the rank-and-file attitude that anti-Chinese expressions were ubiquitous in Democrat papers, less common in elite journals, and combated in what was left of the abolitionist press? Though he makes nothing of it Gyory offhandedly notes that "for years" the overwhelmingly working class *Boston Pilot* "opposed Chinese immigration." (Gyory, 174) He doesn't note this earlier in the book when he uses the *Pilot* to make the case that labor sentiment ran against outright exclusion. There was no outpouring of protest against the *Pilot* for its bigoted stance. Gyory could find so few letters opposed to exclusion, that he used the same one twice. On page 69 a letter from "Irish Workman" indicates that the "guiding force" behind rank and file workers' views of the Chinese was the "ideals of equal rights, equal opportunity, and universal brotherhood," a view Gyory finds "Eastern workers stated this point again and again," while on page 125 the same letter is used again to show that some readers of the *Pilot* attacked the anti-Chinese movement, though Gyory now admits that such letters "remain too scattered to be accepted as the voice of labor." The *Anthracite Monitor*, the voice of Pennsylvania's union miners, and an important labor journal that Gyory does not look at, reprinted much material from San Francisco papers and its editor was not alone in voicing sentiments such as, "The Chinese have injured the white manufacturers, inasmuch as they have taken all the second-class work from them. They are also driving all the second-class Eastern work out of the market... Those who flatter themselves that the Chinese problem will never attain seri-

ous proportions, are as greatly in error as those others who suppose that when it does, workingmen will quietly submit to its results." (*Anthracite Monitor*, October 14, 1871.) It regularly spoke not of the evils of the "coolie system" but simply of "the evils of Chinese labor," "heathen mongols" or "Chinese cheap labor." (*Anthracite Monitor*, January 27, 1872; April 27, 1872; July 20, 1872.)

<sup>44</sup> Don D. Lescossier, *The Knights of St. Crispin, 1867-1874* (New York: Arno Press, 1969; orig. pub. 1910), 101.

<sup>45</sup> Even Gyory recognizes that by 1878 one of the most liberal voices on the Chinese topic, *The Labor Standard*, "began to use the newly popularized verb "Chineize"—meaning to lower wages and tame workers—and devoted considerable space to western correspondents critical of Chinese immigration." (Gyory, 100.) Gyory's crowning shred of evidence upholding his view that, "While exclusion sentiment remained largely localized on the West Coast, some had begun to creep eastward, but still not much" was the mass eight-hour demonstration that took place in Chicago that attracted twenty thousand workers and "the nation's most prominent labor leaders." (Gyory, 101.) To show just how racially tolerant and liberal the gathering was, Gyory quotes from the speech of George McNeill, who condemned Chinese coolies while welcoming Chinese immigrants and claimed the labor movement made no racial distinctions of any kind. Gyory does not tell the reader that one of the floats in the great parade preceding these speeches was a wagon carrying a large transparency depicting "a squad of Chinese with a label setting forth that they could live on rats and cats." Or that in an interview earlier in the day, McNeill did not strike such a color-blind tone: "we find in the most ignorant and abject races there is less difference in physical and mental characteristics than in the most civilized. It is said, that you cannot tell one negro from another, or one Chinaman from another." (Clippings from the *Chicago Tribune* in the George McNeill Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, MSS 12 A, Box 1.) This hardly supports Gyory's conclusion that eastern workers "remained generally sympathetic, though largely indifferent, to Chinese immigration." (Gyory, 101.)

<sup>46</sup> Gyory, 119.

<sup>47</sup> Gyory, 122.

<sup>48</sup> Gyory, 122.

<sup>49</sup> Gyory, 126.

<sup>50</sup> Gyory, 130.

<sup>51</sup> Gyory, 180.

<sup>52</sup> Gyory, 143.

<sup>53</sup> Gyory, 104.

<sup>54</sup> Gyory, 110.

<sup>55</sup> Gyory, 96.

<sup>56</sup> Gyory, 107.

<sup>57</sup> Gyory, 256.

<sup>58</sup> Gyory, 170. While Congress debated various anti-Chinese bills in late 1878 and the spring of 1879, a crucial period of momentum for the Chinese exclusion movement, Gyory again downplays the importance of labor's voice: "one group remained noticeably silent: workers." His evidence? That several labor papers "supported the bill but with little gusto" and that "some labor leaders no doubt greeted the bill with reluctant approval." (Gyory, 162-163.) Gusto is a hard thing to measure and Gyory quotes the *Chicago Socialist*, ("It is the infamous system that permits the importation of Coolies [slaves] and the importers of them that we contend against") to demonstrate its milk-toast commitment. He doesn't find it important that this very same journal covered a labor meeting held in Chicago March 1, 1879 where it was proclaimed that "To flood California with Chinese would drag down the whites of that state... the Chinaman had never been invited, and was not wanted" or that it editorialized: "To convert a few pig-tails from the old to the new heathenism, Hayes would starve out all the Christians of the Pacific coast, and many others besides." (*Socialist*, March 8, 1879) Is this "gusto"? Perhaps, perhaps not, but it is certainly not silence.

<sup>59</sup> Gyory, 171.

<sup>60</sup> Gyory, 175.

<sup>61</sup> Gyory, 219.

<sup>62</sup> See *The Samuel Gompers Papers*, vol. 1, 115 n. 17.

<sup>63</sup> T. W. Glocker, "The Structure of the Cigar Makers Union," in *Studies in American Trade Unionism*, Hollander & Barnett, eds. (New York: Henry Hold & Co., 1912); *The Samuel Gompers Papers*, vol. 1, 125.

<sup>64</sup> Philip Taft, *The A.F. of L. in the Time of Gompers*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 12; "Mr. Gompers said he desired that a warning should be given that if the manufacturers imported any large number to New York they would be responsible for any violent action..." (New York *World*, reproduced in Samuel B. Kaufman, et. al., eds. *The Samuel Gompers Papers* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986], vol. 1, 114); *New York Tribune*, Dec. 8, 1886. Though Gyory does report that in 1881, before the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the FOLTU called for the absolute restriction of Chinese immigration, he tries to marginalize the importance of this act by arguing that had Californian Charles Burgman, the resolution's sponsor, "not attended, it is likely that delegates would have ignored the issue." This is a curious conclusion, given Gyory's admitted lack of any evidence to support such speculation ("no transcript exists. The official proceedings recount little more, and newspaper accounts provide minimal detail"). (Gyory, 220.) The best evidence for the enthusiasm of delegates for Burgman's resolution is that it carried the convention with but one dissenting vote. Gyory also finds that Samuel Gompers must have been a weary supporter of his own union's Anti-Chinese resolution because, as Gyory finds, "In reporting the convention's proceedings in the *Cigar Makers' Official Journal*, Gompers himself transcribed the resolution as favoring 'laws entirely prohibiting their importation.' While this could reflect the increasingly synonymous nature of the terms 'importation' and 'immigration,' it is noteworthy that Gompers chose the phrase less controversial in labor circles." (Gyory, 220.) But Gyory's is an inaccurate synopsis of Gompers' choice of words. Here is the actual phrase Gom-

pers' used: "Resolutions were adopted declaring the presence and competition of Chinese with free white labor as extremely dangerous and demanding the passage of laws entirely prohibiting their importation." (*Cigar Makers' Official Journal*, Dec. 15, 1881; *The Samuel Gompers' Papers*, 242.)

<sup>65</sup> Gyory is particularly reluctant to give the reader the full flavor of how the crucial importation versus immigration distinction was actually phrased. He writes that the NLU "stands out as the only labor body east of the Rockies that failed to distinguish plainly between immigration and importation." (Gyory, 67.) On the contrary, in 1874, an industrial congress in Rochester voted to advocate "the prohibition of the importation of all servile races, the discontinuance of all subsidies granted to national vessels bringing them to our shores, and the abrogation, or at least, the modification of the Burlingame Treaty." (*Equity*, [Boston], May 1874; also found in *The Toiler* [New York], Aug. 22, 1874.) As Gyory well knows, the point of calling for the cancellation of steamship subsidies was to raise the falling ticket prices for Chinese immigrants, and calling for the abrogation of the Burlingame Treaty was, in this context, the same as calling for a prohibition of immigration. Gyory's edited version of the sentiments of the Rochester congress is strikingly different from the primary sources: "Delegates never endorsed Chinese exclusion. At the next two annual meetings, delegates passed nearly the identical resolution, demanding 'passage of a national law' to make the 'importation of foreign laborers under contracts... a penal offense.'" (Gyory, 67.)

<sup>66</sup> *New York Times*, Aug. 18, 1873.

<sup>67</sup> Compare the coverage in the *New York Herald*, Jan. 8, 1873 to the *Workingman's Advocate*, June 21, 1873.

<sup>68</sup> Terry E. Boswell, "A Split Labor Market Analysis of Discrimination Against Chinese Immigrants, 1850-1882," *American Sociological Review*, 51 (June, 1986), 366.

<sup>69</sup> Gyory, 67.

<sup>70</sup> Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International: Marxism and the American Reform Tradition, 1848-1876*, (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1998), esp. ch. 7 "Race and Class in the Two Internationals"; Timothy Messer-Kruse, "Eight Hours, Greenbacks and 'Chinamen': Wendell Phillips, Ira Steward, and the Fate of Labor Reform in Massachusetts," *Labor History*, forthcoming.

<sup>71</sup> Gyory, 163-165.

<sup>72</sup> Gyory, 221.

<sup>73</sup> Gyory, 246.

<sup>74</sup> Gyory, 256.

<sup>75</sup> Weir, "Blind in One Eye Only," 422.

<sup>76</sup> Weir, 428. Weir does cite Gwendolyn Mink, whose work he earlier characterized as being "more neat than accurate" (422) and mentions in his notes that she claims that the Crispins attempted to get "exclusionary legislation" passed, but he does not explain what this legislation amounted to.

<sup>77</sup> Weir, 433, 432; 436.

<sup>78</sup> Weir, 434.

<sup>79</sup> Weir, "Blind in One Eye Only," 423, 426.

<sup>80</sup> Beyond the evidence already presented in this article, it should also be noted that the *Workingmen's Advocate* published a six part series of editorials denouncing the Chinese "Coolie" (Aug. 31, Sept. 7, 14, Oct. 5, 12, Nov. 16, 1872); the *Hartford Labor Journal* explained its editorial opposition to the Chinese April 27, 1872; the *Cooper's Journal* carried news from California, warmly endorsing Chinese exclusion in 1875 (Jan. 1875, p. 21), also July 1872, p. 416 and March 1875, p. 72-73.

<sup>81</sup> Liping Zhu, "'A Chinaman's Chance' on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* (Autumn/Winter, 1995), 46;

<sup>82</sup> Weir, "Blind in One Eye Only," 427.

<sup>83</sup> Weir uses the word "wilding" to describe the rampage of the union miners, a word that can as well apply to frat boys on a bender and must be stretched a bit to encompass a murderous lynch mob.

<sup>84</sup> *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States*, Dec. 6, 1886 (Washington: 1887), 101-147; Cheng Tsau Ju to Mr. Bayard, Nov. 30, 1885, the key letter referred to by Prof. Weir is found on pp. 101-109. See also, Craig Storti, *Incident at Bitter Creek: The Story of the Rock Springs Chinese Massacre* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1991) and Clayton D. Laurie, "Civil Disorder and the Military in Rock Springs, Wyoming: The Army's Role in the 1885 Chinese Massacre," *Montana Magazine of Western History* (Summer 1990), 44-59. Curiously, Weir downplays the number of massacre victims, writing that "at least 22 Chinese were murdered" (427). The officially accepted toll in 1886 was 28 dead. Craig Storti, the leading authority on the massacre, states that 25 bodies were recovered and that 26 more men were missing and presumed dead. (Storti, 142.)

<sup>85</sup> Weir, 428.

<sup>86</sup> *The Journal of United Labor*, Mar. 12, 1887.

<sup>87</sup> *The Journal of United Labor*, Apr. 9, 1887.

<sup>88</sup> *The Journal of United Labor*, Apr. 30, 1887.

<sup>89</sup> *The Journal of United Labor*, Oct. 25, 1885.

<sup>90</sup> Weir, "Blind in One Eye Only," 430.

<sup>91</sup> A prominent New York Knight, George W. Dunne, reported that the radical "Home Club" faction was a scheme that "emanated from the brain of Victor Drury, and was said to be that of the International Workingmen's Association." *John Swinton's Paper*, July 3, 1887. See also Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Yankee International: Marxism and the American Reform Tradition, 1848-1876* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 247-249.

<sup>92</sup> *John Swinton's Paper*, June 26, 1887.

<sup>93</sup> *John Swinton's Paper*, July 10, 1887.

<sup>94</sup> *John Swinton's Paper*, July 10, 1887, p. 3.

<sup>95</sup> Weir, 431-432.

## reviews

---

Kevin Coogan. *Dreamer of the Day: Francis Parker Yockey and the Postwar Fascist International*. Autonomedia. New York, 1999. 642 pages. \$16.95.

BY LOREN GOLDNER

Provincial patriotism of the nineteenth-century type can evoke no response. The unity of the West which the barbarian has always recognized is recognized at the last hour by the West itself.

Western policy has the duty of encouraging in its education of the youth its manifestation of strong character, self-discipline, honor, ambition, renunciation of weakness, striving after perfection, superiority, leadership—in a word—Race.

Francis Yockey, *Imperium* (1948)

**F**ascism in every country, until 1945, almost always conjured up archaic, pre-capitalist, pre-Enlightenment national myth for its symbolism: Mussolini and the Roman Empire, Franco and the Falange, Hitler and the Thousand-Year Reich. In the United States, the task was made more difficult by the absence, for the radical right, of a “usable” pre-capitalist past; for stone white supremacists, the Iroquois Nation or Yoruba culture would hardly do.

Fascism, two world wars, the genocide of the Jews and gypsies, and the weakening of the nation-state through exhaustion cast a cloud over nationalist archaisms in the advanced capitalist world after 1945 (the emerging Third World was of course another story). For these reasons, and because of an important internationalization of capitalism through U.S. world hegemony, it was inevitable that the radical right in the advanced capitalist countries would turn to archaic symbols connected to the West as a whole. Thus, throughout Europe and to some extent in the U.S., “Aryans” (the word having acquired a bad odor) were rebaptized Indo-Europeans, and highbrow intellectuals such as Martin Heidegger, Mircea Eliade, Marija Gimbutas, and Julius Evola created the high road for the rehabilitation of

*Loren Goldner is a writer living in New York City. His work is also available on the Break Their Haughty Power web site at <http://home.earthlink.net/~lrgoldner>*

the old ideas, followed on lower roads by Atlantis buffs, occultists, Celtic tree-worshippers, fake Tibetologists, Wagner freaks, Holocaust deniers and Teutonic rune scholars.

Today, in Europe, including Russia, and to some extent in the United States, important factions of the radical right have quietly buried the old biological racism and the nationalist chauvinism of pre-1945 fascism. The most sophisticated figures, such as Alain de Benoist, freely quote from Antonio Gramsci (for which Gramsci is of course not to be blamed), argue that the old categories of "left" and "right" are dead<sup>1</sup>, and insist that their desire to expel immigrants and Jews from Europe has nothing to do with "grandpa's fascism," but rather because they see such groups invariably as bearers of "other cultures," not inferior, mind you, but "different." These theorists have their own version of post-modern cultural relativism, and say that Jews, blacks and Arabs are fine—just as long as they stay in their own countries, or return there, the sooner the better. The European radical right supported Iraq in the Gulf War, a type of "Third Worldism" that was marginal in Western interwar fascism (but not entirely absent, as we shall see).

What fascism hates above all is universalism, and it hates the Jews for having, through the monotheism they passed to Christianity, supposedly inflicted the "slave morality" (Nietzsche) of universalism on the "strong," "young," "nature-loving" "blond beasts," the Indo-Europeans and other pagans, and for having, through the ban on image-making, destroyed such peoples' pagan nature-worship and myth. Capitalism for the fascists mostly means finance capital, Jews and money; the link between monotheism and abstraction on one hand and commodity production and wage labor on the other is beyond their ken. Behind the hatred of universalism is the hatred of the idea of humanity, or what Marx called "species-being"; fascism sooner or later, and usually sooner, identifies some group, whether whites, or Teutons, or an aristocratic cultural elite, the "Uebermenschen" (supermen) as destined to dominate, or expel, or annihilate the "Untermenschen" (inferior beings), or, more up to date, those who are ineffably "different." The trendy post-modern left supports "difference" and argues for relativistic tolerance (which extends to tolerance of barbaric archaisms, such as cliterodectomy, among "subaltern peoples"), the hard radical right supports it to advocate (at least in its politer forms) removal, but both currents find themselves in profound agreement on the fundamental issue of the denial of hu-



manity as a meaningful reality. Like their predecessors, the early nineteenth century enemies of the Enlightenment and the universalism of the French revolution, they "know Frenchmen, Germans, Italians and Greeks," but consider "man" a meaningless abstraction.

Thus the contemporary right-wing publicist Armin Mohler is not wrong to say that today's post-modernists are the bastard progeny of the Conservative Revolution of the 1920s (about which latter more below).

It is fairly well known that Hitler and the Nazis always insisted that they had learned a great deal from America, and in particular from the American eugenics movement, which preceded their own Social Darwinism, racial laws and ban on interracial marriage, doctrines of blood purity, and medical experiments on "Untermenschen," by decades.

What is less well known is that an American fascist theoretician, Francis Parker Yockey (1917–1960), himself marginal in the American radical right even today, is actually a theoretical pioneer of the contemporary international fascist revival with its new cultural politics, and is recognized as such from France to Russia's contemporary "red-brown" ferment. (Yockey is promoted in the U.S., and somewhat disingenuously, mainly by Willis Carto and the Liberty Lobby.<sup>2</sup>) Contemporary fascism, internationally, finds it a largely losing battle to conjure up the old biological racism and master-race theories: they can chip away at the still-powerful association of such biological determinism with the concentration camps, but they have found a far more fertile path in circumventing such questions with a whole new battle over "culture." And once this is recognized, the centrality of Francis Yockey, the subject of the excellent book by Kevin Coogan under consideration here, and who spelled this out in his 1948 book *Imperium*, looms into view.

Yockey, in his youth, in the depths of the depression, was briefly sympathetic to Marxism, but quickly abandoned it for fascism. Subsequently, in late 1930s Chicago, he jostled different far-right groups such as pro-Hitler German Bundists, anti-labor vigilantes, Silver Shirts, and the Father Coughlin movement. But Yockey himself was no storefront fascist. Possibly the decisive ideological influence in his life had been the reading, in 1934, of Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (a world-wide best seller in the 1920s). Through Spengler (including his later works *Years of Decision* and *Prussianism and Socialism*) Yockey stepped into the fer-

ment of 1890–1933 Germany known as the “Conservative Revolution,” and such other (sometimes brilliant) reactionary theorists as Carl Schmitt, Karl Haushofer, Ernst Niekisch, Ernst Juenger, Moeller van den Bruck, not to mention the highly ambiguous earlier figure of Friedrich Nietzsche. For most of these intellectuals, Hitler and the Nazis were vulgar guttersnipes and their “voelkisch” (i.e. populist) ideology merely one more version of the mass society the Conservative Revolutionaries despised. What mainly characterized the Conservative Revolution were variants of an aristocratic radicalism that imagined a regeneration of decadent bourgeois society from the throes of materialism, democracy, socialism and feminism by a “hard” cultural elite of “supermen,” men such as those tempered in the trench warfare of World War I and the “storms of steel” (the title of Juenger’s 1920’s best-selling novel) of the modern technological battlefield. Spengler, in his major work, had defined “universalism” as the passage from “culture” to “civilization” in an organic rise and fall; this phase emerged when the old culture-bearing elite was sinking into effete aestheticism, and prepared the way for Caesarism (an anticipation of the coming of Hitler).

Aside from Spengler himself, two figures of the Conservative Revolution in particular stand out as decisive influences on Yockey: Carl Schmitt and Karl Haushofer. As a student at Georgetown University in the mid-1930s, Yockey encountered Schmitt as the leading international Catholic jurist of the period. Schmitt’s relationship to Hitler and the Nazis was complex, but hardly (to put it mildly) a hostile one. Schmitt’s sophisticated legal theory was little short of state-idolatry, and presented a distinction between “enemy” and “foe” which passed easily into fascist political and legal thought. An “enemy” for Schmitt was an opponent of the moment, with whom there was temporary conflict and disagreement, but a “foe” was an irreconcilable opponent against whom the struggle was potentially total and lethal. Schmitt ridiculed Western parliamentarism and democracy, and developed ideas about the inevitability of extra-parliamentary activity—i.e. activity in the streets—which also influenced the German New Left in the 1960s (Schmitt was, among other things, an admirer of Lenin). This in turn shaped Schmitt’s idea of *Ernstfall* or “ultimate confrontation” in which normal legality had to be suspended. (Schmitt provided the legal cover for the 1934 “Night of the Long Knives” in which Hitler eliminated the “red fascist” wing of the Nazi Party around the Strasser brothers).

Last but not least (for Yockey) was Schmitt's idea of "Grossraumordnung," literally "great space order" but more concretely a "geographical zone dominated by a political idea" (a concept beyond the nation-state), which after 1945 was taken over into Yockey's call for an "Imperium of the West," a European super-state capable of resisting both the Soviet Union and the United States (though Yockey considered the U.S. the greater danger).<sup>3</sup> But if Schmitt was one of the more brilliant theorists (along with the Italian philosopher Gentile) of fascism's well-known mystique of the state, the figure of Karl Haushofer leads us into some of the most unusual, and important, aspects of Yockey's later development. Haushofer was the leading German exponent of "geopolitics," a theory of international power politics developed by the German Ratzel and the Englishman Mackinder. Based ultimately on a Social Darwinist idea of struggle for "space," geopolitics was a theory of the struggle for world empire, essentially the pre-1914 struggle between then-dominant Britain and ascendant Germany. The basic idea of geopolitics was that the world power which controls the perimeter of Russia controls the world, thus making it the theory of the "great game" among the world powers from the Baltic to China and Japan, via Iran and Tibet. Haushofer spoke Far Eastern languages (Japanese, Chinese, Korean) as well as Russian fluently, and spent years in Japan as a German military attaché, in the wake of Japan's stunning defeat of Russia in 1905. The Russo-Japanese war was of particular significance since it was the first time that a "white" nation had been defeated with modern weapons by a "non-white" nation, and it was a kind of "wake-up call" to emergent anti-colonial struggles everywhere. (Because it also led to the 1905-06 mass strike wave, a dress rehearsal for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, it also set down the association, with a brilliant future ahead of it, whereby colonial peoples came to see 1917 primarily as a national and not as a proletarian revolution.) Haushofer knew a great deal about esoteric schools of Japanese Buddhism (and was rumored to belong to one), and later distinguished himself as an officer in the German army during World War I. But the most important idea which Yockey took from Haushofer was the latter's advocacy of German support for anti-colonial peoples in their struggles against the British and French empires, as well as Haushofer's rejection of white supremacist reticence about such support, at a time when ideas of the "yellow peril" and the rising challenge to "white" world supremacy were common coin through-

out the West. Haushofer is often cited as the inspiration of the lucid passages treating foreign policy in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, but, as Coogan points out, Hitler and Haushofer parted ways over race. Hitler preferred an India under white (i.e. British) rule to Indian independence, however much the latter might weaken the British empire. This Haushofer link to Yockey emerges after 1945 in Yockey's sympathy for Third World liberation struggles, including those of the Palestinians, Nasser's Egypt and Castro's Cuba. The real key to Yockey, however, is summed up in the term "National Bolshevik," a somewhat obscure yet very important strand of the 1920s Conservative Revolution, and one which is increasingly important today. The term "National Bolshevik" refers to an ambiguous minority current that appeared in the revolutionary wave in Europe immediately following World War I. The term was first used by Bela Kun, head of the short-lived Communist government in Hungary in 1919, and cropped up in some statements of Karl Radek, the Communist revolutionary who conducted Comintern business from his prison cell in Berlin in the same year, meeting with members of the German business<sup>4</sup> and military elite as well as with the German radical left. (He also laid the foundation for Russia's commercial treaty with Attaturk in 1920, concluded even as Attaturk was murdering leading members of the Turkish Communist Party.) In 1923, the German CP undertook the brief "Schlageter turn"<sup>5</sup> of several months during which it worked with the Nazis in a campaign against the Versailles Treaty, staging rallies and sharing podiums from which Ruth Fischer attacked "Jewish capital" in a way sometimes difficult to distinguish from fascist rhetoric.<sup>6</sup> Already in 1922, Germany had signed the Rapallo treaty with the Soviet Union, allowing the defeated German army to use the Ukraine for secret training and maneuvers banned under the Versailles Treaty. Because of Germany's central position in continental Europe, the possibility of a German-Russian rapprochement against the West often hovered over European power politics, posing a direct threat to Britain and France, and much of the foreign policy of the two major world empires was aimed at preventing just such an alliance. Germany since 1870 had been the "new power" threatening British and French hegemony, and German support of different kinds for anti-colonial movements in the British and French empires (which dated from the pre-1914 Kaiserreich) was a constant problem for the latter. Thus in 1922 when the Rapallo treaty brought Germany into an alliance with revolutionary Russia, there

was general consternation in Anglo-French ruling circles. In 1932 (as in 1923), the German Communist Party again cooperated with the Nazis<sup>7</sup> in strikes and street actions against the "main enemy," the "social-fascist" German Social Democrats, a perspective they bizarrely maintained even after Hitler seized power and put them into concentration camps, expressed in their slogan "After Hitler Comes Our Turn." Finally, the consternation occasioned by Rapallo was completely eclipsed by the impact of the Stalin-Hitler Pact in 1939.

But "National Bolshevism" refers to much more than just a rapprochement between Germany and Russia, or tactical collaboration between Communists and Nazis against liberals and Social Democrats. It condenses a series of attitudes which reach far beyond Europe, and which have wider currency in the contemporary world than is generally recognized: hence the importance of Yockey and of Coogan's study of Yockey. National Bolshevism is one of the most extreme forms of appropriation of elements of the revolutionary socialist movement for the preservation of class society. Weimar Germany from 1918 to 1933 was a laboratory of a myriad of currents thrown up by the simultaneous potential of working-class revolution (1918-1921) and of the extreme reaction (which borrowed significantly from the workers' movement) brought to bear against that potential, culminating in Hitler's triumph in 1933. Though figures such as Bela Kun and Karl Radek are better known, National Bolshevism entered the workers' movement most dramatically in Hamburg and Bremen in 1920, articulated by the two German ex-Wobblies Wolffheim and Laufenberg, who threw themselves into the German workers' councils that sprung up after World War I. For Wolffheim and Laufenberg, as for a number of other currents of the early 1920's in Germany and elsewhere,<sup>8</sup> workers' revolution was the royal road to the national revolution; for the National Bolsheviks, the Russian Revolution was itself a national revolution.<sup>9</sup> (To his credit, Lenin called National Bolshevism "eine himmelschreiende Absurdaet," roughly, a "monstrous absurdity." Unfortunately, other figures of the Third International were not so careful.)

The National Bolsheviks, and later Yockey, saw the cosmopolitan proletarian internationalism of Lenin, Trotsky and the early Russian Revolution as a superficial veneer which was cast aside by Stalin.<sup>10</sup> "National Bolshevism" ultimately transposes Marx's theory of the war between the classes to an international theory of struggle

between “bourgeois nations” and “proletarian nations,” and buries the singularity and autonomy of the working class (the international class par excellence) in a mystique of the state and the nation. In the interwar period, the main “bourgeois nations” (or plutocracies, as Georges Sorel, among others, called them) were Britain and France; after 1945, the same logic was transposed to the new center of world capital, the United States. And nowhere more so than in the work of Francis Yockey. The “proletarian nations” were first of all Germany and Italy, but the term applied equally (if not more so) to all the “new nations” created by the Versailles Treaty, beginning with Eastern and Central Europe, not to mention the Latin American nations under the thumb of Anglo-French or American finance capital, and last but hardly least the growing nationalist ferment in the colonial world, a ferment encouraged, as indicated earlier, by successive German governments.

It is still little recognized today how ideologies first developed in interwar Europe to describe the tensions between the “core” bourgeois democracies and the “periphery”<sup>11</sup> of “young” or “new” nations were exported to the semi-colonial and colonial world, often directly through the influence of “National Bolshevik” or later National Socialist figures, and after 1945 by the Nazis who fled to the Middle East and Latin America. After 1918, dozens of new nations emerged from the four defeated empires (Hohenzollern Prussia, Habsburg Austria-Hungary, Romanov Russia and the Ottomans) and after 1945, dozens more appeared in Africa, the Middle East and the rest of Asia from the breakup of the British and French empires. In most of these “new nations,” as well as in the semi-colonial countries of Latin America (Peron’s Argentina and Vargas’s Brazil come to mind), there was a real or potential local elite that recycled alloyed or unalloyed “National Bolshevism” from its original Central and Eastern European interwar sources into international “left” “anti-imperialist” currency. The 1960s Western leftist admirers of Chou En-lai and Lin Piao would have perhaps been surprised to learn that the latter’s occasional references to the struggle between “bourgeois nations” and “proletarian nations” had been articulated decades earlier by Joseph Goebbels and Gregor Strasser. It would have been less of a surprise, or none at all, to Francis Yockey.

In 1947, Yockey settled in a remote village in Ireland to write his magnum opus, *Imperium*, in which he attempted to reinvent fascism for the new U.S.-dominated world. Yockey had gone AWOL from

the U.S. Army in 1942 after a ring of German and pro-German saboteurs to which his family had connections was arrested by the FBI. Two months later, this "Fifth Columnist" (as opposed to an actual spy for Germany, in Coogan's assessment) had returned voluntarily to the Army and, after a real or feigned mental breakdown, managed to be honorably discharged in 1943 for "medical" reasons. He held a couple of government jobs and then, ("incredibly," as Coogan puts it) in late 1945 went to Germany as a prosecuting attorney for the Nuremburg trials. Less than a year later, he was fired from this position, in which he had distinguished himself by chronic absenteeism, using that year to build up contacts to the anti-Allied German underground which was actively conducting terrorism and sabotage against American military targets.

Much of *Imperium* reads like recycled Spengler, arguing for a hierarchy of culture elites, drawing on the same organic metaphor of rise and decay of cultures used by Spengler.

Like Spengler, Yockey in *Imperium*<sup>12</sup> rejects the old fascist race theories:

Race is not group anatomy.

Race is not independent of the soil.

Race is not independent of the Spirit of History.

Race is not classifiable, except on an ability basis.

Race is not a rigid, permanent, collective characterization of human beings, which remains always the same throughout history.<sup>13</sup>

The hierarchy of races at any given time are historical creations which "can have, of course, no eternal validity"<sup>14</sup>.

Thus the school of Gobineau, Chamberlain...was on the same tangent as the materialists who announced that there is no such thing as Race...The source of a hierarchy of races is History, the forces of happening...Thus, in the subjective sense, there is also a hierarchy of race. Above, the men of race, below—those without race.<sup>15</sup>

For Yockey the "twentieth-century viewpoint on this matter" [in contrast to the biologicistic view of nineteenth-century reaction-LG] begins from the "observed fact...that all strong minorities—both within and without a High Culture—have welcomed into their company the outsider who was attracted to it and wished to join it, re-

ardless of his racial provenance, objectively speaking. The racial snobbery of the nineteenth century was intellectual, and its adoption in a too-narrow sphere by the Resurgence of Authority in Europe between the two World Wars was a grotesquerie."<sup>16</sup>

... 'safeguarding the purity of race' in a purely biological sense is sheer materialism. Race, in both its meanings, is the material of history, not the reverse... To the twentieth-century outlook, a man does not belong to a race; either he has race, or does not. If the former, he has value to History; if the latter, he is valueless, a lackey."<sup>17</sup>

Following this critique of biological racism, Yockey spells out his own view: "...Western policy has the duty of encouraging in its education of the youth its manifestations of strong character, self-discipline, honor, ambition, renunciation of weakness, striving after perfection, superiority, leadership—in a word—Race."<sup>18</sup>

As with race, so with narrow nationalism: "Provincial patriotism of the nineteenth-century type can evoke no response. The unity of the West which the barbarian has always recognized is recognized at the last hour by the West itself."<sup>19</sup>

It was the Slansky show trial in Czechoslovakia in 1952 which brought Yockey's "National Bolshevism" to its final form, in which he transposed the German-Russian "Rapallo" strategy of the interwar period to the new world situation of U.S.-U.S.S.R. polarization, now advocating that Europe as a whole should ally with the Soviet Union, as the lesser danger, against the greater menace of the United States. Along with this view (articulated at a time when most Nazis and other far-rightists were virulently anti-Soviet) went Yockey's revival of Haushofer's call for full support for Third World struggles of national liberation, for the purpose of weakening the U.S. world empire. By executing eleven Jewish members of the Czech Communist Party, the Stalinist bloc was signaling, in Yockey's view, that it was ready to abandon the last pretenses of "Jewish-inspired" proletarian internationalism and fully assert the "barbaric" culture of the peasant masses which had been the other force of the revolution.

Yockey laid this out in his 1953 book *The Enemy of Europe*. In this shorter work, Yockey more sharply rejects, in his own barely-coded language, the "nineteenth-century" aspects of Nazism: "the engrafting of the outworn nonsense of the vertical race notion onto the glorious European Resurgence of Authority brought about by the



European Revolution of 1933 was an enormous tragedy”<sup>20</sup> Yockey argued that unless Europe unified around a “Prussian-ethical Future,” the “nation-building Ethic of Authoritarian Socialism” then “the Europe of 2050 will be essentially the same as that of 1950, viz. a museum to be looted by barbarians, a historical curiosity for sight-seers from the colonies; an odd assortment of operetta-states; a reservoir of human material standing at the disposal of Washington and Moscow; a loan market for New York financiers; a great beggars’ colony, bowing and scraping before the American tourists.”<sup>21</sup>

Yockey’s basic view, drawing on his Spenglerian categories, was that the rule of the “culture-distorters” (i.e. the Jews) who had “taken power” in the U.S. in Roosevelt’s New Deal, posed a greater threat to Europe than the Soviet Union, which was merely a peasant-barbaric society. If the Soviet Union conquered Europe, in Yockey’s analysis, it would finally be “Europeanized” in the same way so many barbaric conquerors (e.g. the Mongols) had been culturally absorbed in the past by the peoples they conquered. The U.S., on the other hand, had in Europe a stratum of willing “traitors,” the “chur-chills, degaulles, adenauers,” et al. (Yockey relished writing their names in the lower case) who were willing to be the flunkies of American domination. Whether by sparking a European uprising against Soviet domination or by absorbing the Soviet bloc into a European super-state organized along the lines of “Authoritarian Socialism,” Soviet control of Europe was preferable to the ongoing rule of the pro-American stratum of “traitors.”

Thus: a culturally-based rather than biological theory of race, a rejection of narrow nationalism for a European super-state conceived along the lines of Carl Schmitt’s *Grossraumordnung*, and a pro-Soviet, pro-Third Worldist “tilt” against U.S. world hegemony are the core of “orthodox Yockeyism,” and have been taken over, as one source, into the contemporary European New Right by theoreticians such as Alain de Benoist (France), Jean-Francois Thiriart (Belgium) and Aleksandr Dugin (Russia). As indicated earlier, the anti-universalism which Yockey got from Spengler (cultures do not interpenetrate, Jews and blacks are not part of the West because they are bearers of “other cultures”) is strangely echoed by contemporary leftist post-modernism’s (e.g. Edward Said) view that cultures confront each other as invariably distorting “texts”<sup>22</sup>.

This distillation of “orthodox Yockeyism,” however, hardly begins to do justice to Kevin Coogan’s book on Yockey. By focusing

on ideology, we are neglecting Coogan's painstaking reconstruction of Yockey's political activities from the mid-1930s until his suicide in FBI custody in 1960. We are neglecting in particular Yockey's peripatetic life on the fringe of the far-right fringe (as indicated, his one U.S. promoter, Willis Carto, rejected both Yockey's culturalism and his anti-Americanism). But above all we are neglecting or downplaying Coogan's detailed history, through the prism of Yockey, of the post-1945 international fascist regroupment which in many ways is as or more interesting as the account of Yockey himself. Coogan devotes major space and rich detail to important fascist intellectuals such as the Italian Julius Evola (who wrote an important favorable review of *Imperium* in 1951), as well as Yockey's connections to and influence on the entire Nazi network that escaped into exile in Latin America and the Middle East after the war. In addition to the portraits of Spengler, Schmitt and Haushofer in the formation of Yockey's own thought, Coogan provides remarkable detail on the cultivation, in these circles, of esotericism (Evola's books, often with no reference whatever to his lifelong fascist leanings, can be found in any New Age bookstore in the U.S. or Europe today). He shows the far-right uses of J.J. Bachofen's theory of matriarchy (which also influenced Marx and Engels) and of the sexual theories of Otto Weininger, who argued that every culture is aligned somewhere on a spectrum between absolute poles of masculine and feminine. Some Nazis had used Weininger's theories to buttress their own views of the subordination of women, as part of a general view of contemporary democracy as a largely feminized society in which the old warrior values had been eroded. Coogan provides material on the Rumanian anthropologist Mircea Eliade, who in the 1930s had been a vocal intellectual and activist of the fascist Iron Guard in that country (a fascist movement whose sadism toward Jews nauseated even the German SS officers during the war!) and who became a world-renowned professor at the University of Chicago.

Last but not least, Coogan delves into the history of the political activities of these networks. The story of Evola leads into the "strategy of tension" of the terrorist far-right in Italy up to the 1970s, with murky connections to the clandestine armed network called Gladio which was established under U.S. auspices in Italy (with direct counterparts in other major European countries) for purposes of armed action against the Italian left and a possible Soviet invasion. Perhaps most remarkable in Coogan's account are the activities of

the Naumann Circle, a group of ex-Nazis who developed "astonishing influence" in various nationalist regimes (e.g. Nasser's Egypt) and movements (e.g. the Palestinians, first of all through the well-known pro-Nazi Grand Mufti of Jerusalem). Hjalmar Schacht, Hitler's finance minister, became a consultant in Nasser's Egypt and negotiated deals for German industry aimed at undercutting Anglo-American deals with Egypt and with Mao's China.

Nasser hired the former Nazi manager of the Skoda armaments factory in Czechoslovakia to upgrade Egypt's military, and in 1955 the Skoda works, now under Stalinist rule, concluded a major arms deal with Nasser. (Here was "National Bolshevism" point-blank.) Coogan tells the equally remarkable story of the new fascist and "red-brown" currents in Russia well before the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the sponsorship of anti-Semitism from the highest levels. Finally, he traces the evolution of certain "Yockeyite," "National Bolshevik" figures of the European far-right, such as Alain de Benoist, who broke with Jean-Marie LePen's National Front over the question of race, and came out for various Third Worldist movements, all the while propagating Indo-European paganism against "universalism" (code word for "Jewish" influence) and promoting Holocaust "revisionism" in Third World countries he visited. In 1992, de Benoist was at the center of a "National Bolshevik" episode in which far-right and Stalinist intellectuals participated in a forum to discuss what they had in common. Similar meetings have taken place periodically in Libya.

Thus Coogan's excellent book, starting from an obscure American fascist figure who has little currency in the far-right of his own country, takes us into the whole world of the international fascist revival since 1945, and in particular to the sophisticated cultural forms of race theory that have pushed aside the old biologism and national chauvinism, and the disconcerting ways in which this constellation of ideas of a "new fascism" has made its way into high cultural expression. Coogan's book is essential for an understanding of the "reactionary-radical" ideologies that are emerging to challenge the international communist project.

---

#### NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> As the French writer Charles Péguy put it one hundred years ago, "the slogan 'neither left nor right' always means 'right'" ("qui dit 'ni de droite ni de gauche' dit de droite").

- <sup>2</sup> As Coogan points out, Carto rejected Yockey's rejection of biological racism and considered his pro-Soviet, anti-American stance more than a bit over the top.
- <sup>3</sup> The rejection of both the Soviet Union and the United States as two variants of "materialism" was a common theme on the European far-right from the 1920's onward.
- <sup>4</sup> These contacts included Walter Rathenau, a German-Jewish industrialist who advocated an advanced kind of corporatism as the solution to the "social question," and who was assassinated by the radical right in 1922.
- <sup>5</sup> Leo Schlageter was a German nationalist killed by French troops during the 1923 occupation of the Saarland, and who thus became a hero of the nationalist right and far-right. Radek announced the Schlageter turn with a famous speech in Moscow entitled "Ein Wanderer Ins Nichts," "A Wanderer Into the Void."
- <sup>6</sup> Fischer's full statement was "he who denounces Jewish capital is already a warrior in the class war, even though he does not know it." (Cited in E.H. Carr, *The Interregnum*, p. 190.
- <sup>7</sup> It should be pointed out that in 1923, the KPD was not yet fully Stalinized and the Third International had not yet embraced the previously unheard-of theory of "socialism in one country"; thus the "Schlageter turn" of 1923 can be charitably interpreted as a foretaste of the full-blown "Third Period" policy of 1932.
- <sup>8</sup> It should not be forgotten that the full name of the Nazi Party in German was Nationalsozialistische Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), the National Socialist German Workers' Party. The National Bolsheviks, as indicated, looked down on the National Socialists with aristocratic disdain, but they emerged from the same ferment and the same "oscillation" (Jean-Pierre Faye's term) between the Conservative Revolution and the proletarian revolution.
- <sup>9</sup> See the eccentric but highly informative book of Michael Agursky, *National Bolshevism in the USSR* (Boulder, 1987).
- <sup>10</sup> In far-right circles, it was common to consider the defeat of Trotsky in 1928 as the defeat of the "Jewish" internationalism of the early revolution, and the victory of Stalin as the triumph of Russian nationalism.
- <sup>11</sup> The terms "core" and "periphery," more familiar from now-discredited 1960s and 1970s Marxist theories associated with figures such as Andre Gunder Frank or Immanuel Wallerstein, were actually first used by the ambiguous (to say the least) sociologist Werner Sombart to describe Germany's relationship to England and France. Cf. the key work of Joseph Love, *Crafting the Third World* (Stanford, 1996), for a detailed discussion of the migration of these concepts from Germany to Eastern Europe to Latin America. For an even more remarkable study of an Ottoman bureaucrat who theorized first Turkish and then Arab nationalism under the influence of German romantic philosophy, cf. Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism* (New York, 1980).
- <sup>12</sup> The book was published in 200 copies in 1948; quotations are from the 1962 New York edition.
- <sup>13</sup> *Imperium*, p. 282.
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.* p. 285.
- <sup>15</sup> *ibid.* pp. 285-294.
- <sup>16</sup> *ibid.* pp. 300-301.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* pp. 301–302.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.* p. 307.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* p. 316.

<sup>20</sup> F.P. Yockey, *The Enemy of Europe*, 1985 ed. p. 44.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.* p. 45.

<sup>22</sup> See the devastating critique of Said's "provincial" relativism by the Syrian Marxist Sadek Jelal al-Azm, which has been reprinted in numerous places, including the journal *Khamsin*.

Peter Gran, *Beyond Eurocentrism: A New View of Modern World History*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996, xiii plus 440 pages. \$19.95

BY ADAM SABRA

This work claims to offer a new approach to the study and teaching of modern (ca. 1850–present) world history. The author's main objective is to go beyond a Eurocentric approach that measures the modernity of states and societies by their "Westernization." In this regard, Gran not only calls into question the premises of modernization theory, but also neo-Weberian and many Marxist theories of history which take it for granted that the "West" is the image of everyone's future, and that societies that are not yet "Western" either are on their way to becoming so, or else are hopelessly backward dinosaurs which are doomed for extinction.

Gran is by no means the only historian to criticize the Eurocentric assumptions of world history. A number of scholars associated with Subaltern Studies have also questioned the commonly held assumptions of many scholars of Indian history, implicitly calling into question the ways in which all non-Western history is written. Unfortunately, however, these scholars have increasingly leaned towards postmodern identity politics and its methodological counterpart, "Post-Colonial Studies." This trend has led them to downplay the significance of class and take cultures as units of analysis. In this sense, Gran's critique of Eurocentrism is

*Adam Sabra teaches Middle Eastern History at Western Michigan University.*

much more radical. Gran consciously sets out to show that some European states have more in common in some ways with certain non-European states than with their fellow Europeans.

The main tool of analysis in this work is Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Gran argues that ruling elites in all states, not just democracies, practice some form of hegemony. Even dictatorships and one-party states must win over their populations in some manner. For Gran, this implies finding some means to blunt or channel class conflict so that the majority will never challenge the ruling minority. Gran identifies four "roads" which characterize these types of hegemony. The four are the Russian Road (which also applies to Iraq), the Italian Road (also India and Mexico), the Tribal-Ethnic Road (Albania, Belgian Congo/Zaire), and Bourgeois Democracy (Great Britain, the United States). The Russian Road employs a "caste" which transcends class and is dependent on an autocratic state to reduce class conflict. The Italian Road exploits regional differences, typically a developed North against an underdeveloped South, for the same purpose. Tribal-Ethnic states use "gender," a term that might have been replaced with patriarchy, while Bourgeois Democracies use race.

Obviously, these types of hegemony are models. Gran admits that many states combine more than one type of hegemony in their strategy for maintaining dominance ("mixed roads"). Indeed, one could question some of Gran's categorizations. Is Iraq primarily a Russian Road hegemony, or perhaps a Tribal-Ethnic state? One could furthermore argue that states change their approach to ruling from one form of hegemony to another. What happens when "Italian Road" Czechoslovakia becomes two separate states? Gran argues that each hegemony goes through liberal and corporatist periods. Liberal periods are characterized by one class rule, while severe class conflict forces a class alliance (corporatism) on ruling elites. Each of these approaches has its influence on the production of culture, a process Gran sees as eminently political and largely dominated by the reigning hegemonic forces in a given society. One particularly interesting aspect of this book is the emphasis on the political dimension of historical writing. With each society, Gran discusses how changing class alliances and internal cleavages lead to disputes about national history should be written.

One point any reader of *Race Traitor* will raise is whether hegemonies can be explicitly repudiated, either by the ruling class in

favor of a new hegemony, or by a counter-hegemonic group. Can race be taken out of American politics, and what would happen if it were? At one point, Gran suggests that race has become less effective as a ruling class strategy of control, and that multiculturalism is now used to bolster a flagging racial order. According to this interpretation, the purpose of multiculturalism is to provide "buffer races" which allow whites to conceal their oppression of blacks by displaying their openness toward advancement by Asians or Latinos.

While this theory may have some merits, it is seriously flawed. For one thing, multiculturalism is at best a temporary strategy. Sooner rather than later, these "other races" will be assimilated into either the dominant or subordinate "race"; they cannot function as "buffer races" for long. Also, the nature of whiteness has changed considerably since the Civil Rights movement succeeded in abolishing legalized segregation. The internationalization of American capital has also reduced the incentives given to white workers and raised the possibility of a non-racial democracy.

While this book contains a number of important ideas, it must also be said that the quality of the writing and of the argument is very uneven. At times one senses that the author has not succeeded in digesting the massive amount of material he has read. This is unfortunate because there are a number of important insights here which deserve a wide audience.

Ultimately, Eurocentrism is more than just a form of ethnocentrism. If it were simply that, the Western countries would be no more guilty than other cultures. It was capitalism, and its accompanying expansion through modern imperialism, that gave the Western countries a sense of unassailable supremacy. While the rise of non-European centers of capital accumulation and industrial production have called into question the relationship between culture and economic development, the international economic order continues to favor the U. S., Europe, and Japan. So long as this is the case, one suspects that Gran's plea that historians go beyond Eurocentrism is likely to fall on deaf ears. Nonetheless, he has given us some tools with which to rethink our received categories.

## **Back Issues Available — \$5 each**

### **Number 3, Spring 1994**

Who Lost an American; Behind Prison Walls; Letters from Lucasville Prison; When We Don't Get Race, It Kills Us; Free To Be Me; Richmond Journal: Panic, Rage and Reason; Out of Whiteness; Interview with Student Activists; Can I Get a Witness; Comparative History and Sociology of Racism; The White Worker and the Labor Movement; Unreasonable Acts; Anti-fascism and Anti-racism

### **Number 4, Winter 1995**

Manifesto of a Dead Daughter; Police-Assisted Homicide; White Silence, White Solidarity; Family Matters; The Jewish Caste; Lucasville Update; White Blues; Exchange with a Socialist Critic

### **Number 5, Winter 1996**

Aux armes! Formez vos bataillons; Until It Hurts; Beyond History; Exchange with a National Socialist; Daily Life; The African Drum Craze; Headgear; Black-Jewish Conflict

### **Number 6, Summer 1996**

White History Month; Copwatch; The Children's Crusade; Other Races; Latinos: The Indian Escape Hatch; Illegal Alien

### **Number 7, Spring 1997**

Abolitionism on Campus; Whiteness in Early Virginia; Statement to ARA; American Dreaming; Race and the Enlightenment

### **Number 8, Winter 1998**

The Lucasville Insurrection; Privilege on Holiday; Team Players; Chiapas and Montana; A History of the Magnet School System in Montclair, New Jersey; Constructively Demoted



**Number 9, Summer 1998**

**Special Issue—Surrealism: Revolution against Whiteness**

**Number 10, Winter 1999**

**Renew the Legacy of John Brown; Abolition and the White Studies Racket; Resisting Arrest; Hunting Whiteness; Postcard from the Empire of Queen Ixolib; Race and the Enlightenment II; Brown Family Letters; Appreciation of Russell Banks; Black 47**

**Number 11, Spring 2000**

**Teachers as Saviors, Teachers Who Care; John Brown and the Black Revolt; Mejiroando la Raza; Vachel Lindsay; White Trash Identity and the Loss of Slack; An American Nightmare; The Wiggers You Love to Hate; Slot Right 24 Take; Social Climbing; History 014**

**Number 12, Spring 2001**

**Reality and the Future; “A Fucking White Revolutionary Mass Movement” and Other Fables of Whiteness; Abolitionism and the Free Society**

**Number 13/14, Summer 2001**

**Surrealism in the USA: The Suppressed Issue of Socialist Review**

“I think that the work you are doing with *Race Traitor* is important.”

—Russell Banks

“I view *Race Traitor* as one of the more hopeful signs in today’s troubled racial environment.”

—Derrick Bell

“...the most revolutionary challenge to racism made by American-European intellectuals in my lifetime.”

—Ishmael Reed

“...among the strongest, funniest and most politically charged critiques of whiteness to appear since slave storytellers spun out the ‘Master and John’ tales.”

—David Roediger

“...the most profound statements on race I have ever read put together by people who choose not to be white.”

—Sapphire

“...the most visionary, courageous journal in America.”

—Cornel West

Subscribe to RACE TRAITOR

Send \$20 for four issues to:

Race Traitor  
Post Office Box 499  
Dorchester MA 02122  
[www.racetraitor.org](http://www.racetraitor.org)

## **WHAT WE BELIEVE**

**The white race is a historically constructed social formation.** It consists of all those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in this society. Its most wretched members share a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it, in return for which they give their support to a system that degrades them.

**The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race, that is, to abolish the privileges of the white skin.** Until that task is accomplished, even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue, domestic and foreign, in U.S. society.

The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender, or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a predictor of behavior will lead to its collapse.

**Race Traitor** aims to serve as an intellectual center for those seeking to abolish the white race. It will encourage dissent from the conformity that maintains it and popularize examples of defection from its ranks, analyze the forces that hold it together and those that promise to tear it apart. Part of its task will be to promote debate among abolitionists. When possible, it will support practical measures, guided by the principle, **Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity.**

# **journal of the new abolitionism**